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THE HOUSE ON THE MOOR.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"MARGARET MAITLAND," "ADAM GRAEME,"

"THE LAIRD OF NORLAW,"

&c., &c.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE HOUSE ON THE MOOR.

CHAPTER I.

SAM returned victorious, with an Army List, and the Rector's compliments, who would call upon Colonel Sutherland presently, in time to wake up the excellent Colonel, who was a little amazed, and a little amused at himself, to be made aware of that unusual indulgence. Sam had his own word of advice and warning against the deceitful blandishments of the "Ould Hunderd," with which he went away, flattered and ashamed, but by no means cured of his passion for "sodgering." To the questions of his mother, the hopeful young man only responded, that "the Cornel said th' army was a noble perfession," and appended

thereto a vow to "break the head of that thundering 'Ould Hunderd'" at the first opportunity, neither of which conclusions was satisfactory to Mrs. Gilsland. The Colonel had scarcely put on his spectacles, and begun to turn over the leaves of the professional beadroll, when the proprietor of the same made his appearance, very cordial and anxious that the Colonel should dine at the Rectory, where the mother and sisters of "my boy in India" were already preparing themselves with a hundred questions to ask the old Indian officer. Colonel Sutherland, however, had already tasted quite enough of the damp, out-of-doors air for one day. He made the most of his threatening rheumatism by way of apology. He was fatigued with a long drive, and taking leave of friends. The Rector was politely curious; he had no doubt that he had the pleasure of knowing Colonel Sutherland's friends?

"I think not," said the Colonel, decidedly; "my brother-in-law is a recluse, and, I fear, keeps his family in the same retirement; besides, it is five miles off."

"'Five miles is nothing in the country," said the courteous and persistent Rector.

"My relations live at Marchmain," said Colonel Sutherland, who had still the "Army List" in his hand—"I want to find out if the Sir John Armitage of this neighbourhood is an old friend of mine—Captain Armitage of the 59th—do you happen to know?"

"The very same," said the Rector; "he succeeded six or seven years ago, but he has not been at the Park for a year back. Bad health, I believe, an unsettled mind—he has never taken kindly to his new position; he thinks it is his duty to marry, and is extremely nervous about it. I thought it proper to pay him a good deal of attention when he was here. Poor man, his anxiety about the young ladies of the neighbourhood, and his terror of them, is something ludicrous to see."

"You are so fortunate as to have daughters of your own," said the Colonel, without perceiving the inference, which the other, possibly from a little disagreeable consciousness, applied instantly.

"My daughters were very young at that

time," said the Rector, quickly—"almost children; besides, there are many points in which, though I think it right to show him attention, I do not approve of Sir John. His opinions are not what could be desired, and the father of daughters requires to be very careful whom he commits them to, as perhaps you are aware, Colonel Sutherland."

Colonel Sutherland bowed very gravely; the appeal touched on griefs too profound to be exposed to the compassion of a stranger. "He was a very good fellow when I knew him," said the Colonel; "I hear he was on terms of very intimate friendship with a Mr. Musgrave—he who died lately—is that true?"

"Ah, Mr. Musgrave?—yes, I knew him very well; an unfortunate, imprudent man, lavish and foolish," said the Rector. "He had a very good fortune to begin with, but lived with the most entire recklessness, like a man of three times his means. He brought up a young man, a sort of distant relative, as his heir. Poor man, when the affairs were examined it turned out that the heir had nothing

but debt to enter upon; a very sad business altogether. Ah, yes, to be sure, Sir John, now that I recollect, had been to school with him, or something—there *was* a friendship between them."

"And does no one in the neighbourhood feel disposed to do anything for the young man?" asked the Colonel.

"For—Roger? Well, it is a very difficult question," said the bland Rector; "men with families of their own are so circumscribed in that way. There are no very wealthy men in our neighbourhood; and really, no one has felt warranted in incurring so great a responsibility. Sir John, indeed, might have done something for him; but then he is abroad, and of course no private individual likes to step forward, and perhaps excite expectations which could never be realized; besides, he has, no doubt, relatives of his own."

"And so, I presume, there is an end of him, poor fellow," said the Colonel, with the least outbreak of impatience; "is there anything known against the young man?"

"Nothing in the world," said the Rector,

readily; "we all received him with pleasure, and found him really an acquisition; a young man not of much education, to be sure, but perfectly unobjectionable in a moral point of view. I remember urging strongly upon the late Squire the propriety of sending Roger to Cambridge, when my own boy went there, for we had no suspicion then of his unfortunate circumstances. He would not, sir; he was an unreasonable, old-fashioned person—what you call a John Bull sort of man. He said his Nimrod had no occasion to be a student. Poor man!—he would have acknowledged the wisdom of my counsels had he been living now."

"Is the young man, then, a Nimrod?" asked Colonel Sutherland.

"I understand—for of course such exploits are a little out of my way," said the gracious Rector—"that he is one of the best shots in the country; and I know from my boy, who was fond of athletic sports, that he excels in most of them. So much the worse for him now. It is a very sad thing, and one unfortunately too common, to see young men

brought up to no other habits than those of a country gentleman, and then launched upon life with the sentiment of the unjust steward, 'To dig I know not, and to beg I am ashamed.'"

There was a little pause after this solemn and somewhat professional utterance, the Colonel not perceiving exactly how to answer this calm regret and sympathy, which never conceived the idea of helping, by a little finger, the misfortune it deplored. After a little silence, the Rector added, "You were acquainted with Mr. Musgrave, perhaps?—you feel an interest in the young man?"

"I do, certainly—though I had no acquaintance whatever with his former circumstances; he has been thrown accidentally in my way since I came here," said Colonel Sutherland.

"Let us never say anything is done accidentally," said the Rector, rising to take his leave with the most ingratiating smile—for he was low church, and evangelical in theology, however he might be in his actions; "everything has a purpose, my dear sir. Let us hope that it is *providentially* for poor Roger that he has been thrown in your way."

So saying, with many regrets that he should not have the pleasure of entertaining the stranger at the Rectory, the excellent incumbent of Tillington left him. The Colonel shrugged his shoulders when he was gone. The authoritative, insinuating professional manner with which his reverence corrected the expression of the old Christian stranger, who, coming "accidentally" to a knowledge of Roger's trouble, was after all the only neighbour whom the poor youth found in his extremity, made the Colonel both smile and sigh. "Right enough to correct me," said to himself the Scotch soldier, whose ideas of Providence wanted no enlargement by such advice; but once more the Colonel shrugged his shoulders, and remembered involuntarily the priest and the Levite who passed on the other side. He could not comprehend this entire want of all neighbourly and kindly feeling among the inhabitants of the same locality. The old man had been so long absent from home, and was so much accustomed to attribute the want of human kindness, which of course he had seen many times in his

life, to the deteriorating effect of a strange country, and the entire want of home influences, that it amazed him now to perceive how even the primitive bosom of an English rural village held sentiments of self-regard as cold and unneighbourly as anything he had met with in the faraway world to which he was accustomed. Why could not this Rector, the friend and consoler of his parish by right of his office, a man who (undeniable inducement to all tenderness in the Colonel's tender heart) had children of his own — why did not *he* take the matter in hand, and appeal to Sir John Armitage, if the baronet alone was to be expected to do anything on Roger's behalf? The Colonel shook his head over it, and took refuge in his dinner. No repetition of instances would make the generous old man adopt or believe in this as the way of the world; he had only stumbled unfortunately upon cold-hearted individuals. Heaven forbid that *he* should put such a stigma on his brethren and his kind!

CHAPTER II

He had scarcely finished his dinner, when young Musgrave came to him, full of excitement and emotion, with a letter in his hand. The Colonel received him with all the more cordiality, that he had not yet quite lost the impression of the Rector's visit. The young man had evidently something to tell, and that something as evidently was of a nature to move him much.

"You are the only individual who has shown any interest in me," cried poor Roger; "I could not rest till I had come to tell you; I am not so entirely alone as I supposed I was. Look here, sir, a letter from my mother—my dear mother, whom I have never been able to forget, whom I have never ceased to love. I

have done her injustice, Colonel; though she has only written it for my eyes, I bring it to you, because to you I have accused her unjustly. My mother has neither forgotten nor forsaken me!"

And with honest tears in his eyes, the young man thrust his letter into the Colonel's hands, half reluctant, it is true, to show his mother's expressions of love, but eager, above all, that she should be done full justice to, and acquitted of all unkindness. The Colonel took the letter with grave sympathy. It was not by way of conquering Roger's heart entirely that he put on his spectacles with so much serious attention, and applied himself to the hurried and half-coherent letter as if it were something of the gravest importance. He did naturally, and spontaneously from his own heart, this, which was the most exquisite compliment to the young man; and the Colonel's glasses grew dim as he read. It was the letter of a weak, loving woman, with too little strength of character to assert for herself any right of protecting or succouring her first-born, who was alien and strange to her

husband and his family. One could almost see the gentle, broken-spirited woman overridden even by her own children, uncertain of her own mind, in weak health, and with nerves which everything affected, as one glanced over those hurried lines, which seemed to be written in absolute fear of discovery. There was little in them but the mother's yearning for her boy—her dear boy, her first-born, her own Roger, whom she prayed for on her knees every day, and thought of every hour. There was neither wisdom nor reason in the epistle—the poor woman had nothing to advise, nothing to offer. A cold observer might have thrown the whole away as affectionate nonsense, and desired to know what benefit that could be to the young man in his troubles. The Colonel knew better. "Therewithal the water stood in his eyes." He knew, without a word from Roger, how this tender touch had stanched the wounds of the young man's heart.

The only thing which he did not understand was a blurred and hasty postscript, to the effect that the enclosed was *her own*, and

that her dear boy need have no hesitation in using it. This Musgrave explained to him by holding up, as he received back the letter, a twenty-pound note.

"And my mother enclosed this, sir," he said, looking up with an honest eagerness which twenty twenty-pound notes could not have produced—the poor lad was so proud to be able to show this evidence of his mother's concern for him. "I know she must have saved it up—spared it from her own necessities for me; I know she must, for she knows very well I would never receive an alms from *him*," cried poor Roger. "I—I daresay you think it's not very much to talk about, Colonel, but I could not rest till you had seen that I was wrong. To think I should have done her such injustice!—and you perceive, sir, that I can indeed take a week or two's leisure before I decide upon my future *now*."

"I am very glad of it," said the Colonel; "and still more glad that you have your mother's letter to comfort you. Take a lesson by it my boy, and never think you're forsaken. If we could know exactly our neighbour's

circumstances, and see into their hearts, we would be slow to judge them, let alone dear friends. 'Can a mother forget her child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?' Ah! my young friend, God knows better than we do the nature he has made. Here are two things come at once—your heart is comforted, and you are content to wait?"

Roger hung his head for a moment at the last proposition; he felt a little ashamed of giving in to the dawn of expectation which his last interview with Colonel Sutherland had excited in him in spite of himself; but the Colonel's unlooked-for kindness, and the affection of his mother, had warmed the young man's heart, and put him once more on good terms with the world. He began to believe in friendship and kindness, and to think that, after all, matters were not hopeless with him; but still his high spirit revolted from the idea of waiting till an application for aid had been made on his behalf, and doing nothing on his own account till that had been granted or refused.

"I can wait, and think it all over again for a few days," he said, with a little hesitation, "though indeed there is little to think of; for the case is not at all changed; but because you wish it, Colonel—you who have been so kind to me. I would be a poor fellow indeed, if I could not wait for a time for your pleasure."

"Very well," said Colonel Sutherland, with a smile; "we will let it stand on these grounds—it will please me. I have made a discovery also to-day. I find that your Sir John Armitage is an old friend of mine. I shall be very glad to seek him up for my own sake; they tell me he is invalid, and unsettled; but that should not make him less cordial to his fellow-creatures. We have been under fire together, and under canvas. He is an older acquaintance of mine than of yours. It will be odd if two old soldiers, when they lay their heads together, can do nothing to help on a young one. I have a little influence myself, and my own boy is secure. Some day you two may stand by each other when we old fellows are gone. I

daresay, if you were together, you would not be long of making friends with my Ned. He is an honest fellow, though his father says it, and I think never gave me an hour's pain."

"But what can I say? I who have no claim whatever on your kindness, why are you so good to me?" cried Roger, astonished; "thanking you is folly; I have no words for it; it is beyond thanks; why are you so generous to me?"

"Tut, boy, nonsense!—I have sons of my own," said Colonel Sutherland; "and what is the good of an old man in this world? 'By-the-bye, tell me—have you ever sought or admitted the friendship of your neighbours since your grief? There are various families hereabout, I understand; your Rector for example—I am afraid you must have repulsed that good man in your first trouble—eh?—remember I am hard of hearing; you were too melancholy, too miserable for sympathy, and you have taken it into your head since that they had ceased to care for you?"

"I was thankful for all the sympathy I got; I trusted everybody then," said Roger, simply;

"but—it does not matter," he said, after a little hesitation; "I found out the difference afterwards; no—it was not me."

"But the Rector—he has children, a son—was not he very friendly?" asked the Colonel, with persistence; he wanted to ascertain, as closely as he could, what was the real state of the case.

"Ah, Willy!"—said Roger; he paused a little, and grew red, and shook his head with a slight, involuntary motion, as if to shake off some disagreeable thoughts. "We were very good friends once," he said—"pah! why should I care—you will not think worse of me, Colonel Sutherland? I had rather not think of Willy. It is the greatest folly in the world, but I cannot help it; when I think of meeting him, perhaps, in my changed circumstances—I who used to be almost, if there was any difference, superior to him—I feel it painful; I don't like the idea; this is the plain truth. I had rather not go to India for the risk; forgive me! I had rather you knew the worst of me."

"If that is the worst I am glad to know it," said the Colonel. "It is a very natural

feeling; to have been without it, would have proved you a different person from what I supposed. Now, tell me again; shall you stay here? you are still in your late friend's house —what is to be done with it?—who does it belong to?—and during this little interval shall you stay here?"

"The Grange is *mine*," said Roger, with a little pride; then he continued, with a slightly bitter smile—"next week everything is to be sold—*everything*—if they leave a wooden stool for poor old Sally in the kitchen, I will be grateful to them; but they cannot sell the Grange. It is entailed—*I* cannot sell it. Poor, dear old nest, it is the last wreck of all that ever belonged to the Musgraves; everything but that is gone already; yes, though it is empty and desolate I shall stay, till I leave all, in my own house."

"Then you are heir, not only of love, but at law," said the Colonel, gravely.

Somehow that changed the aspect of affairs a little. Useless though it was, that old house, empty and desolate, it gave still an indisputable point of inheritance and ancestry,

upon which the young outcast could set his foot. It seemed more and more impossible to the Colonel, whose mind was not free of romantic prejudices, and upon whose imagination this circumstance made a great impression, that the young man should be left to his own forlorn devices; and he grew more and more angry at the neighbouring people, who could suffer not only "a worthy youth" to enter the world under circumstances so unfriendly, but could also permit the total extinction of an old family, whom such a young man, once aided to begin, might well resuscitate. However, he wisely kept these thoughts to himself. He exacted a promise from Roger to do nothing without letting him know, and to wait until he should be able to obtain an answer from Sir John Armitage; but, above all, to keep him advised of where he was, and what he was doing—a promise which the youth gave with a slight reluctance. Then a cordial farewell passed between them. They parted like old friends—the young man with grateful affection, the old man with interest and kindness quite fatherly.

They had never met till three days ago, yet however long they lived, neither could ever cease now to feel the warmest interest in the other. In the meantime, the Colonel put up this matter of Roger Musgrave in the bundle with his most particular concerns, and gave himself, with the most earnest gravity, to his voluntary task of aiding and helping this stranger, nothing doubting to succeed in it; while Roger, on the other hand, went home to his solitary Grange, not knowing well what to make of it, struggling against the renewed hopes of his mind, fortifying himself against renewed disappointment by recalling his brief but sharp experience of the friendship of the world, and wondering whether he did right to trust, as he could not help trusting, the sincerity of his new friend. The young man paced in front of his house, among the dark trees, revolving over and over these questions which were of so much importance to him, and stimulated in all his hopes, without being aware of it, by that letter of his mother's, which he prized so much; and Colonel Sutherland sending out for paper, pens, and

ink, and receiving in answer a dusty inkstand, a rusted steel pen, and two sheets of post paper highly glazed and with gilt edges, wiped his spectacles, lighted his low bedroom candle, that the light might suit his eyes, and sat down to write.

CHAPTER III.

COLONEL SUTHERLAND was not very much addicted to correspondence: he wrote kind, wise, fatherly letters to his boys, but, except on extreme occasions, he wrote to nobody else, and was not easily moved to the exercise even in case of his oldest friends. It was therefore with a little importance that he opened out his gilt-edged paper before him, and smoothed the crumple, which Sam Gilsland's hand, not used to such delicate burdens, had left in the sheet, and, beginning with a most particular date, "Tillington Arms, 15th February, 184—" made a pause, after having achieved that, to think what he should say. We need not linger over all the Colonel's cogitations and pains of production. Here is

at last, in the best language he could think of, the most wise and careful statement of his case which he found it possible to make:

"My dear Armitage,—I congratulate you very cordially upon the accession of rank and fortune which I have just learned has fallen upon you. Living, as you know I used to do, very much engaged with my own duties, and hearing scarcely any news except what occurred in our own branch of the service, I had never heard of this till to-day, when I suddenly found my old comrade in the Sir John Armitage of a district quite unknown to me, but with which I have managed to establish a connection rather surprising to myself, by dint of a few days residence here. I came home six months ago, after more than thirty years' service, exclusive of leave and former absence from duty, and had the happiness to find my boys well and hearty, and making progress to my entire satisfaction. Ned, you will be pleased to hear, is already provided for, and goes *out* the summer after next, to enter upon active life, with, I trust, if the

boy works as he promises to do, an appointment in the Engineers. My other boy, I think, will very likely take to the Church, and be the solace of my old age. He makes very good promise for it, at least now. These, you will be sorry to know, are all that God has been pleased to spare me out of my flock.

"You will think it odd, perhaps, that I should hasten to tell you this the very moment of hearing your whereabouts and discovering your identity; but, to tell the truth, I have another reason more urgent, which, in point of fact, made me aware that you now belonged to this neighbourhood. I have 'accidentally" (here Colonel Sutherland paused, looked at the word, remembered the Rector's reproof, and made a half movement of his pen to draw it through; but, stopping himself, he smiled and shook his head, and went on without changing the expression) "met a young man called Roger Musgrave in the village, a very fine young fellow, to the best of my judgment. I understand that you were intimately acquainted with his godfather, whom the people here call Squire Mus-

grave, of the Grange. *He* died lately—when it was found that all he had was insufficient to meet his debts, and that this poor youth, whom I don't doubt you remember, was left entirely unprovided for. I found the boy in conference with a romancing old rogue of a sergeant of my own regiment, who was filling his head with all kinds of ridiculous accounts of a soldier's life in India. You may suppose I made short work of the sergeant, but found the young man, on entering into conversation with him, entirely bent upon enlisting. He had evidently been treated very shabbily by your gentry here; and, having no money, and being too proud to seek help from any one, the lad had made up his mind that the only thing left him to do, was to go for a soldier, and never be heard of more. By dint of questioning, I discovered that *you* were his relative's (I don't know what is the degree of kindred—the boy calls him his godfather) closest friend, and made up my mind at once, believing you to be a stranger, to take upon myself the task of making an appeal to you, to prevent this sacrifice. To-day I have dis-

covered who you are, which you may suppose does not diminish my inclination to claim your assistance for this young fellow, who has captivated me, and gained my warmest interest. I have some little influence myself, which, now that my boy is provided for, I have no personal occasion to use. Don't you think you and I together could get him a pair of colours without any great difficulty? You know him better than I do, and I am sure you are not the man to leave a youth of good blood and high spirit to throw himself into the ranks in the romantic and vain hope of rising from them. I cannot profess to regret that so few chances of promotion are open to the private soldier, though I remember you have your own views on this subject; but I am most reluctant to see a youth, who would be a credit to the profession, throw himself away.

"I write this without the least idea where it will find you; but earnestly trust you will lose no time in answering. I need scarcely tell you, who I daresay have not forgotten the time when you were twenty, that the boy is very impatient, and quite likely to do some-

thing rash out of his own head, if he supposes himself neglected. Address to me at Milnehill, Inveresk, North Britain, where at all times yon will find my solitary quarters, and a warm welcome, should you think of straying so far north. My dear Armitage, yours very faithfully,

"EDWARD SUTHERLAND,
"Late Colonel, 100th B.N.I."

Having finished, read, and re-read this important epistle, the Colonel put it up, and writing in large characters, deeply underscored, *To be forwarded immediately*, put it beside him to be sent by express to Armitage Park. Then the old soldier's countenance relaxed. He laid his other sheet of paper lightly before him and dipped his pen in the ink with a smile. This time he was going to write to his boy.

"I have had no small vexation, Ned, since I came here," wrote the Colonel to his son; "you shall hear a circumstantial account of it. First, I was dismayed at the sight of the house—a melancholy place on the edge of the moor, without a scrap of garden or enclosure of

any kind, and not a house within sight; fancy your poor pretty cousin Susan, at seventeen, shut up in such a prison, with never a face but her father's and brother's to cheer the dear child in her solitude! You have always heard that your uncle Scarsdale was a man of very peculiar character, and you will remember that I told you the very remarkable circumstances in which your cousin Horace stands. This, my dear boy, if you should happen to have any intercourse with Horace, you must do your best to forget. By some unaccountable perversion of mind, which I can excuse, perhaps, in a man of his character, but certainly cannot explain, your uncle has carefully concealed everything from his son which can throw the least light upon his position; and as he has at the same time refused all special training and education to the lad, and never encouraged or directed him to make any provision for his future life, you may imagine what an unsatisfactory state everything is in at Marchmain. First of all, you know, Ned, I am delighted with Susan. Please God, some day we'll have her at Milnehill, and let

her see that there is something in life worth living for. It would make my old heart light to see her pleasant face about the house, and yet, Ned, sometimes I can scarcely look at her without tears. Heaven knows it should be our duty as well as our pleasure to do everything we can to brighten the life of this dear, pure-hearted little girl, who is the only woman in the family now.

"But, to begin at the beginning, I got a very strange account of the family from the man who drove me to Marchmain; then I was startled by the sight of the house; then, though greatly re-assured by the appearance of Susan, I was overcast again by seeing the cloud that came over her at the mention of her father. He never appeared to receive me, but sent for me to his study, where he made the request that I would keep his secret from his children in the most absolute terms, not without reproaches against me, and against —God forgive him!—my poor sister, because I knew it, which I confess rather exasperated me. I resolved at once not to stay in the house, nor to see him again, and accordingly

came down here to this little inn—very poor quarters—where I have been for three days. Horace accompanied me here, and on the way broke out into rather extravagant protestations of his wish to leave home, and bitter complaints against his father. You may suppose I was confused enough, longing to let the poor lad know the secret which could have explained all to him, and hindered by my promise. I detest mystery—always abjure it, Ned, as you value my approbation; nothing can be honest that has to be concealed. This miserable, mistaken idea of your uncle's has gone far, I am afraid, to ruin the moral nature of his son. There is a shocking unnatural enmity between the two, which cuts me to the heart every time I think of it. Of course, Horace has no clue whatever to the secret of his father's conduct. He thinks it springs out of mere caprice and cruelty, and naturally fumes against it. This is all very dismal to look at, though I suppose, by dint of usage, it does not seem so unnatural to them as it does to a stranger. Horace himself, I am sorry to say, does not quite satisfy

me; with such an upbringing, poor fellow, who can wonder at it? He is very clever, but much occupied with himself, and does not seem to have the honest, spontaneous wishes and ambition of a young man. There is a look of craft about him which grieves me; and I fear he has got into indifferent company, according to his own avowal, and declares to me he despises them, which, in my opinion, does not mend the matter. Altogether, I am very much puzzled in my own mind about him; he is very unlike the young men I have been accustomed to meet with—and that with my experience, in thirty years of active life, is a good deal to say.

"However, with my advice, he has been led to conclude that he will adopt the law as a profession, and is anxious to be put in the way of it immediately, and do what he can to qualify himself for making his own bread in an honourable way. Can you believe it possible, my dear boy, that his father, on my appeal to him, absolutely refused either to help your cousin in his most laudable wish, or to explain to him why he did not? Oh, Ned, Ned,

how miserable we can make ourselves when we get leave to do our own will! The man is wretched—you can read it in every line of his face; but he will not yield to open his heart to his boy, to receive him into his confidence, to make a friend of his only son. This miserable lucre—and I am sure in his better days, when your poor aunt was alive, nobody imagined that Scarsdale had set his heart much upon it—has turned his whole nature into gall. God forgive the miserable old man that left this curse behind him!—though, indeed, that is a useless wish, as he has been dead for fifteen years, and his fate determined long ago.

"So you perceive, on the whole, I have had a good deal on my hands since I came here. Now that nothing can be done with his father, I mean to make an appeal on behalf of your cousin to one of the trustees. To tell you the truth, Ned, I am almost afraid now of the secret being made known to Horace. Your uncle has so forgotten that word, 'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath,' that it absolutely alarms me when I think what may be the consequences if Horace

hears it suddenly from any lips but his father's. So, if you should chance to come in contact with your cousin, my dear boy, see that you forget it, Ned. Let never an *appearance* of knowledge be perceived in you—to be sure, this of itself is a kind of deceit, but it is lawful. If Scarsdale himself could be moved to disclose the whole to his son, a better state of affairs might be brought about—otherwise, I am alarmed to think of any discovery, more than I can say.

"Not content with this business, I have taken in hand, like an old fool as I am, another young fellow, whom I have fallen in with here; a fine, sincere, hearty lad, whom I hope to hear of one day as your brother-in-arms. I have just been writing on his behalf to old Armitage, of the 59th, whom you remember, I daresay, when you were a child, and who knows this young fellow, of whom I'll tell you more hereafter. To-morrow I go home (D.V.), and will post this in Edinburgh, as I pass through, that you may know I have had a safe journey. I had a letter from Tom the day before I left. The rogue

has got five or six prizes at the examination; but of course he has told you all about that before now.

"God bless you, my dear boy; never forget the Gospel grace, and all we owe to it—nor your love and duty to our Father in Heaven.

"E. SUTHERLAND."

After finishing this paternal letter, the Colonel leaned his head upon his hands for a little in silent cogitation. He was rather tired of his epistolary labours, and could not help thinking with a secret sigh of the carpet-bag, which had still to be packed up-stairs, and of the chilly journey which he had to undertake early next morning. Had he not better put off his other letter till he got home to Milnehill? "There is no time like the present," said the Colonel, with a sigh, and he rung the bell and commissioned Mrs. Gilsland to procure him another sheet of that famous gilt-edged paper. Having obtained it, and fortified himself meanwhile with a cup of tea, which the landlady brought at the same time, the persevering Colonel thus indited his third epistle:—

"SIR,—It is a long time since I met you at the house of my brother-in-law in London, and it is very possible that you may have forgotten even the name of the writer of this letter. I am the brother of the late Mrs. Robert Scarsdale—late Colonel in command of the 100th Regiment, B. N. I., in the Honourable Company's service, and since retiring from active service have resided at Milnehill, Inveresk, North Britain, where any answer you may think proper to give to this communication will find me. I write to you now on behalf of my nephew, Horace Scarsdale. His father, to my great grief, has kept him entirely ignorant of his very peculiar and painful circumstances; and, at the same time, with a feeling sufficiently natural, but much to be deplored, declines to aid him in studying the profession which he has chosen, being that of the law. Under these circumstances, which, as his nearest relative, I have become aware of, I feel that my only resource is to apply to you. Mr. Robert Scarsdale, as you are aware, is still a man in the prime of life, and, so far as I know, in excellent health. To keep

the young man without occupation, waiting for the demise of a vigorous man of fifty, would, even if my nephew were aware of all the circumstances, be something at once revolting to all natural feeling, and highly injurious to himself. I venture to ask you, then, whether you are justified in advancing to him, or, if you prefer it, to me, under security for his use, a sufficient sum to enable him to enter on the study of his profession? The matter is so important, that I make no apologies for stating it thus briefly. This would be of more importance than twice the amount can be when his youth is gone, and the best part of his life wasted. I beg you, for the young man's sake, to take the matter into your serious consideration, as trustee under the unhappy arrangement which has done so much harm to this family. I will be happy to enter into further details, or make any explanation in my power, on hearing from you; and trusting that your sympathy may be so far moved by my story as to dispose you to the assistance of my unfortunate nephew, of whose talents I have

formed a very high opinion.—I have the honour to remain, your faithful servant,

"EDWARD SUTHERLAND."

This done, the Colonel put his letters together and retired into his arm-chair, with a satisfied conscience; as he sat there silent by the fire, the old man carried his pleadings to a higher tribunal. How could he have kept his heart so young all these years, except by the close and constant resort he made to that wonderful Friend, whom every man who seeks Him must come to like a little child?

CHAPTER IV.

WITHIN a week after Colonel Sutherland's departure from Tillington a little flight of letters arrived from him—one to Susan, full only of her uncle's heart, and all the kind devices he could think of to amuse and give her pleasure; and a more business-like communication to Horace, who, during these seven days, had felt Marchmain more and more unendurable, and did not behave himself so as to increase anybody's comfort in the house. "I have appealed on your behalf to a person who ought to feel an interest in you," wrote the Colonel—"and as soon as I hear from him I will let you know immediately whether he can help me to put you in a satisfactory position. If not, my dear boy, we must try

what my own means can do; and, in that case, I should propose that you come here to me, where it might be possible enough for a vigorous young man like yourself to pursue your studies in Edinburgh, and at the same time live with me at Milnehill. All this we can arrange by-and-bye. At present there is no resource but to wait, which I must advise you to do, my dear Horace, with as much cheerfulness as possible, for your own, and for all our sakes."

Horace put up this letter with a smile. There was one thing in it which should certainly have made the advice contained here palatable. The Colonel, remembering himself that very likely his nephew was kept without money, enclosed to him, with the merest statement that he did so, a five-pound note—the sight of which did bring a momentary pleasure, mingled with mortification, to the young man's face. But his bitter, ungenerous pride, made the kindness an offence, while it was a service. He never dreamed of rejecting it, but wiped off all necessity for gratitude by feeling the present an affront. It was a

strange alchemy which Horace exercised; he made the most precious things into dross, putting them into the fire of his contemptuous philosophy. "Was it to please me my uncle did this, or was it to please himself?" he said, with that smile in which no pleasure was: and so made it out, instead of a natural act of kindness, to be a selfish piece of personal gratification on the part of Colonel Sutherland, who very likely had pleased himself mightily by this little exhibition of liberality and apparent goodness, at Horace's expense. With this miserable ingenuity Horace defended himself from all the influences of kindness, and stood coldly and bitterly superior to the devices which he supposed himself to have found out. Having thrust the note into his pocket with this satisfactory clearance of everything like thanks from his own mind, he turned to the letter itself, which was not at all agreeable to him. He had no more idea of waiting for the decision of the anonymous individual to whom his uncle had appealed, than he had of proceeding to Edinburgh, and living under the eye and inspection of Colonel

Sutherland. He had unbounded confidence in himself, in his own abilities and skill in using them; he was not disposed to wait upon anybody's pleasure, or to be diverted from his own purpose, because some one else was labouring for his benefit in another fashion. He smiled as he read his uncle's letter, and thought upon his own scheme; but it never occurred to him to tell the Colonel that his pains were unnecessary, that he himself saw another way, and had resolved upon his own course. That was not Horace's way; he preferred to know of these exertions being made for him, and secretly to forestall, and make them useless, by acting for himself. Then it appeared to him as if he should recover his natural superiority to his uncle, and demonstrate triumphantly that he was not a person to be insulted with favours and kindnesses, or from whom thanks and gratitude were to be expected. With these sentiments he put up the letter in his pocket, and looked with disdainful amusement at Susan, who was still in the full delight of her excitement over hers; and went out, as was his wont, to ripen his

own plans in his mind, and, secure in the possession of the Colonel's bank-note, to determine on his own independent movements, and decide when he should leave home.

Emotions somewhat like those of Horace, yet as different as their natures, were roused in the mind of young Roger Musgrave by a communication very similar. To him, afraid of startling the sensitive young man, the Colonel wrote with the greatest delicacy and tenderness. He told him that he had applied to Sir John Armitage for the aid of his influence, and had already put all his own in motion; that he had very little doubt speedily to see his young friend bear Her Majesty's commission, and that all he had to beg of him was a little patience and confidence in his very sincere friend. Roger did not pause for a moment to suggest to himself that Colonel Sutherland was exercising a natural taste for patronage and affairs in thus befriending him. The young man started up in the solitary library of the Grange, where he sat that day for the last time, his cheeks crimson with excitement, and his eyes full of tears.

He was confounded, troubled, touched to the heart by the friendship shown to him; and yet, as he thought over it alone in the silent house, felt it overmuch for him, and could scarcely bear it. Should he take advantage of this wonderful goodness, the busy devil whispered in his ear? Was it right to impose his misfortunes—which, after all, were not so bad as many others in the world—as a claim upon the tender compassion of the Colonel? Was it generous to accept services which, perhaps, another had more need of? He could not remain quiet, and resist this temptation; he rushed out, like Horace Scarsdale, into the bare woods, where the wind was roaring, and through the dark plantation of fir-trees, with all its world of slender columns, and the dark flat canopy of branches overhead, which resounded to the level sweep of the gale; and where, by-and-bye, the *things* around took his practical and simple eye, and won his heart out of the tumult of thoughts which he was not constituted to withstand, and which were very likely, in his unwonted solitude, to drive him into some irresistible

but unpremeditated rashness, and make him break his promise before he was aware. Then he returned home, fatigued and exhausted, lost himself willingly, and of purpose, in an old romance, borrowed from the village library, and so kept out of the dangerous power of thought, till it was time to sleep. After that his imagination played strange freaks with Roger. We cannot tell anybody what his dreams were about; for though they seemed to himself wonderfully significant and vivid, he was mortified to find that he could not recall them in the morning so distinctly as he hoped. For he was not a poetical hero, but only a young man of very vigorous health and simple intelligence, whom grief and downfall, and melancholy change of circumstances, had influenced deeply, without making any permanent derangement, either of his mind or his digestion.

He had no need of dreams to increase the real pain of his position next morning. It was the day of the sale; a kind of simple heroical devotion to the memory of his godfather, an idea of being on the spot to repel any slight which

might be thrown on his character, impelled him to be present in or near the house during the whole day. Very likely he was very wrong to expose himself to the trial, but in his youthful, excited feeling, he thought it his duty, and that was enough for Roger. The bland Rector, who came with his wife to buy some favourite china ornaments, which the lady had contemplated with longing eyes in the Squire's time, extended a passing hand to Roger, and recommended him, scarcely stopping to give the advice, not to stay. Some young men, warmer hearted, surrounded him with attempts, the best they knew, to divert him from the sight of what was going on, and scandalized the grave people by their jokes and laughter. The humbler persons present addressed Roger with broad, well-meaning condolences: "Ah, if th' ould squire had but known!" one and another said to him with audible sighs of sympathy. The poor youth's eyes grew red, and his cheeks pale; he assumed, in spite of himself, a defiant look: he stood on the watch for something he could resent. The trial was too much for his warm blood and inexperienced heart; and when the

great lady of the neighbourhood passed out to her carriage, as the sale drew towards a close, and saw him near the gate with his colourless face and agitated look, she scarcely bowed to poor Roger, and declared, almost in his hearing, that the young man had been drinking, and that it showed the most lamentable want of feeling on his part to be present at such a scene.

Poor Roger! perhaps it was very foolish of him to expose himself unnecessarily to all this pain. When the night came, and the silence, doubly silent after all that din, he went through the rooms, where the moon shone in through all the bare, uncurtained windows; where the straw littered the floor; and where the furniture was no longer part of the place, but stood in heaps, as this one and that one had bought it, ready to be carried away to-morrow; with his heart breaking, as he thought. In a few hours the desolation of the Grange would be complete, although, indeed, emptiness itself would be less desolate than the present aspect of the familiar place. Once more he read over the Colonel's letter,

with all its good cheer and hopefulness. Only to have patience! Could he have patience? —was it possible that he could wait here, listless and inactive, while the good Colonel laboured for him?—and once more all his doubts and questions returned upon the young man. Should he accept so great a favour?—was he right to stand by and allow so much to be done for him, he who was a stranger to his benefactor? He buried his face in his hands, leaning on the table, which was the only thing in the apartment which had not been removed out of its usual place. Here exhaustion, and emotion, and grief surprised the forlorn lad into sleep. Presently he threw himself back, with the unconscious movement of a sleeper, upon his chair. The moon brightened and rose in the sky, and shone fuller and fuller into the room. The neglected candle burned to the socket and went out; the white radiance streamed in, in two broad bars of light, through the bare windows, making everything painfully clear within its range, and leaving a ghostly twilight and corners of profound shadow in the rest of the

apartment. There he lay in the midst of his desolated household sanctuary, with the heaps of packed-up furniture round him, and the candle trembling and dying in the socket, and the white light just missing his white face—the last of the Musgraves, the heir of emptiness!—yet in his trouble and grief keeping the privilege of his years, and sleeping sweet the sleep of his youth.

CHAPTER V.

WHILE the two young men responded thus to Colonel Sutherland's communications, Susan took her letter to her heart, and found unbounded comfort in it. All had not disappeared with Uncle Edward. Here was a perennial expectation, a constant thread of hope henceforward to run through her life. Never before had Susan known the altogether modern and nineteenth-century excitement of looking for the postman. It gave quite a new interest to the day—any day that unknown functionary might come again to refresh her soul with this novel delight. She could see him come across the moor, that celestial messenger! Not a Cupid, honest fellow; but bearing with him all the love that

brightened Susan's firmament. She thought it would be quite impossible to be dull or listless now: even to be disappointed was something which would give a point and character to the day; and all was very different from the dead blank of her former life, in which she had no expectation, no disappointment, nothing to look for, and for entertainment to her youth only her patchwork and Peggy's talk, enjoyed by intervals. Her whole existence was changed. Uncle Edward's bundle of books, which had not captivated Susan at first sight, she found, after looking into them, to be more attractive even than her new embroidery frame. They were all novels —a kind of composition totally unknown to Susan. She had been very little attracted by literature hitherto; in the first place, because to obtain a book was a serious matter, necessitating a visit to her father's study, and a formal request for the undesirable volume, which had no charm for a young imagination when it came. But now Susan read with devotion, and amazement, and delight, each more vivid than the other. She entered

into the fortunes of her heroes and heroines with a *perfect* interest, which would have won any story-teller's heart. She sat up almost all night, in breathless engrossment, with one which ended unhappily, and cried herself to sleep, almost frozen, with great indignation and grief at the last, to find that things *would* not mend. There, too, she found enlightenment upon many things. She learned, after its modern fashion, the perennial fable of the knight who delivers his lady-love. She found out how it is possible for a heroine to come through every trouble under heaven, to a paradise of love, and wealth, and happiness; and Susan's spirits rose, in spite of herself, into that heaven of imagination. Sometime or other nature and youth must come even to Marchmain; sometime it would be Susan's turn; sooner or later there would be some one in the world to whom she too would be the first and dearest. This inalienable privilege of womankind came to every Laura and Lucy in her novels, happily or unhappily; and the novels were not so far wrong either—so it does, to be sure, in life; but Susan did not

take into her consideration the sad chance that liberation might be offered to the bewitched princess only by the *wrong* knight. The wrong knight only came in as a rival to make some complications in the story, as Susan read it; and somehow the girl adopted the tale by intuition, and fell into a vague delight of innocent dreams. Pursuing these at her needlework, after all her novels were exhausted, was almost as good as another romance; and this tale spun itself on inexhaustibly, a story without an end.

This spring in Susan's fresh heart developed itself unawares in her actions and life. She went about the house with a more sprightly step; she caught up Peggy's snatches of song, and kept humming and murmuring them, without knowing it. Sometimes her hands fell idle on her lap, as her new thoughts rose. Often she went out upon solitary rambles, with this pleasant companionship in her heart. It would not be right to say she was bolder, for the contrary was the case—she was shyer, more ready to shrink from any person whom she met; but somehow found a vague, de-

lightful expectation, which gave a charm to everything diffused over her life.

A few days after she received Uncle Edward's letter, Susan had the good fortune to meet her friend Letty, her sole acquaintance —her secret intercourse with whom she had tremblingly revealed to the Colonel. Letty was delicate, and had not been permitted to be out of doors during the bad weather. She was a tall, meagre girl, who had outgrown her strength, and whose sallow cheeks, and prominent light gray eyes, made the greatest contrast possible to Susan's blooming health and simple beauty. Letty was supposed to have received a wonderful education: she could play on the piano, and draw, and speak French—achievements which, in Peggy's opinion, made her a most desirable companion for poor Susan, who was ignorant of all these fine things. Besides her accomplishments, Letty was very sentimental, and wrote verses, and took rather a pathetic view of things in general. Her great misfortune was that in her own person she had nothing to complain of. She was the only child of her parents, who petted and

humoured her, as old people are apt to do to the child of their old age, and who were correspondingly proud of her acquirements. Consequently, to her own great disgust, she did very much as she liked, and was contradicted by nobody. She threw herself, with all the greater fervour of sympathy, into the circumstances of her friend, not without a little envy of Susan's trials, and splendid imaginations, had she been in the same position, of what she should have done. After this long separation she flew upon Susan, throwing her long arms round her friend's neck with enthusiasm. Then the two, with arms interlaced, strayed along by the side of the high hedgerow in the winterly sunshine—the young buds opening out on the branches against which they brushed in passing, and the young grass rustling under their feet. There was not a single passenger on the road as far as they could see. They were free to exchange their friendly confidence, without the least fear of interruption.

"Oh! Susan, I have wanted so to see you! I have been so melancholy shut up at home," cried Letty; "and when I wanted to come out, mamma would not let me. *I* do not mind be-

ing ill. Why should not I die young like my cousin Mary? I think it must be very sweet to die young, when everybody will be sorry for you—oh, Susan, don't you?"

"I—don't—know," said poor Susan, who thought this was a great sign of Letty's superiority, and scarcely liked to confess her own worldlymindedness. "No; I should think it rather hard to die if I had a great many people who loved me like you."

"Ah, people may *love* one—but then, perhaps, they don't understand one," said Letty. "Mamma would not let me go to the Sabbath school, because she thought I might take cold! Ah, Susan, do you think that is an excuse that will do at the Judgment?—perhaps I might have said something to one of the children which she never would have forgotten all her life—and to think of the opportunity being lost, for fear I might take cold! I am sometimes afraid," said Letty, with a deep mysterious sigh, "that God will think it necessary, for poor papa and mamma's sake, that I should die very early; for I am so frightened that they are making an idol of me. We ought not to love anyone so very much, you know."

"I think I would not mind how much anyone loved me," said Susan, with a little boldness; "the more the better, I think; for indeed I am sure, Letty, that the Bible never says anywhere that it is sinful to be very, *very* fond of one's friends."

"We must never make idols of them," said Letty; "and when I see how mamma takes care of me, I tremble for her. I should not mind it at all myself, but she would be so lonely if I were to die."

"Oh, Letty, for pity's sake, do not speak of it!" cried Susan.

"Why shouldn't I speak of it? I feel quite sure that people who feel like me never live long," said Letty. "I am going to write my will in poetry, Susan—I did one verse the other night. I think it is rather a nice idea—it is about putting flowers on my grave."

"Oh, Letty, do be quiet!—for your mamma's sake!" cried Susan, in terror and dismay, holding fast by her friend's arm, as if afraid to see her vanish into the impalpable air.

Letty was not at all inclined, having made

so great an impression, to give up the subject, and was about to resume it in a still more pathetic tone, when Susan, stimulated by her own livelier meditations, made an animated diversion.

"My Uncle Edward has been here!" said Susan; "he is the very kindest, dearest old man you ever saw. I did not think there was anybody like him in the world. He took me to Kenlisle one day in a gig, and bought me books, and I don't know how many things. Oh, Letty, such delighful books!—one is the 'Heiress;' I have just finished it; about a young lady that had a great deal of money left her, and did not know of it, and was brought up quite poor, and a gentleman fell in love with her, and they went through *such* troubles; and at last they were—but oh, I forgot, I ought not to tell you the end. You don't know how nice it is to get frightened over and over again, and think something dreadful must happen, and yet everything comes all right in the end. I wish, I am sure—oh, Letty, do you think you could come, just come once, to Marchmain?"

"Yes, if you wish me, Susan," said Letty, with a little demureness.

"Wish you! Oh, if I could only have my own will! Would your mamma be pleased?" cried Susan; "and would you promise not to be frightened if you saw papa?"

"Frightened!" exclaimed Letty, repeating the word in her turn. "But if I saw him, it would perhaps be my duty to speak to him, Susan—for very likely if some one spoke to him *properly*, about being good to you, and about what people say, he would be kinder. I should like very much to see him—perhaps I might be the means of doing him good."

Susan was lost in unspeakable dismay. "Oh, Letty, what *are* you thinking of?—you don't know papa!" she said with a smothered voice; her desire to show Letty all her treasures fading before her terror at the thought of anybody attempting to "do good" to her terrible father. Unconsciously she quickened her pace, and hurried her companion farther from Marchmain. The idea terrified her out of her discretion. She forgot everything else in that dreadful thought. Lost in her appre-

hensions, she hurried her companion on towards Letty's own house, where she resolved to deposit her safely out of harm's way, telling meanwhile in elaborate detail the plot of another of her novels. Letty, who had no intention of making an immediate onslaught upon Mr. Scarsdale, turned the matter over in her mind, and thought it was "quite a duty," if she should see him, to remonstrate with her friend's unnatural father. The thought captivated Letty. As for the consequences, instead of being frightened, she would be pleased to be denounced and upbraided. That would be the persecution which she could not possibly find out in any other form in her life, and for which she longed as the seal of her Christianity. Notwithstanding, she inclined her ear to hear of the novel, and was not unmoved by Susan's promise to send it to her. They parted at a little distance from the little manse, which was Letty's home. "And remember, Susan," said Letty, kissing her affectionately, "that whenever you choose to send for me, I shall come."

Susan turned home again alone, with the

sensation of having escaped from a great danger. She was quite sick with apprehensions. No wonder her father debarred her from society, when the issue was that a girl of her own age should take it upon her, without warrant from any one, to argue the question of his conduct with papa. She made haste to reach Marchmain, with an odd fear that Letty might possibly take another fancy and get there before her; and what with the fright and the ridiculous thought, Susan, half laughing and half crying, began to run to the defence of her home and her father. Who could the poor child trust if Letty failed her? When she came in sight of Marchmain, Susan stayed her steps; she did not want to betray her panic to any one there, though indeed nobody but herself ever looked out of these gloomy windows. There was some one, a rare event in that road, passing before the house. He went slowly along in front of Marchmain, looking at it. Susan looked at it too, with curiosity, wondering what could interest any stranger in her cheerless home. The sun shone once more on the gable as

Colonel Sutherland had seen it, besetting the bare walls round and round, and printing off its naked outline against the moor, which stretched round it on every side. Familiar as she was with the house, Susan's heart sank as her attention fell involuntarily upon the strange nakedness and neglect which its unenclosed condition seemed to show. A bit of cottage paling, a yard of grassplot, the merest attempt at flowers, even a little paved yard, would have made a difference. No such thing was there; the doorstep descended upon the wayside herbage; around, the black whins and withered heather came close up to the walls. Here was no gracious life, active and affectionate, to beguile into verdure the stubborn yet persuadable soil. Nobody cared—that was the sentiment of the place: its unloveliness was of the merest unimportance to those who found a shelter within its walls. Who was this looking at it? When he had once passed the house, he turned back again, made a little pause, and then sauntered along the front of it once more, advancing to meet Susan, who

felt a little alarmed at so unusual an exhibition of interest. One of the little clumps of seedling trees in the moss interposed between them before they met. Coming out of its shadow at the same instant, they encountered each other suddenly, and without preparation. Susan half stopped, started, made a suppressed exclamation, for which she could have killed herself, and blushed over all her face. The young man was no less startled; he too grew crimson with a guilty and conscious colour; and as Susan hastened past him, stepped aside out of her way, and took off his hat, without attempting to say a word. Both not only recognized each other, but perceived, with a wondering sensation, something akin to pleasure, that they *were* mutually recognized. Both hurried off the scene precipitately, without looking behind them, and both somehow discovered that this sudden meeting had given a different direction to their several thoughts. Strange, unexplainable consequence of a natural accident!—why should not these two have met on a public road as well as any other two in the

district? Yet somehow this sudden encounter had a certain extraordinary supernatural aspect to them both.

This person whom Susan was so unaccountably startled to see, was, of course, Roger Musgrave, walking here, as he walked everywhere within ten miles, because the poor fellow could not endure himself, and did not venture to battle with his own thoughts, and kept himself out-of-doors and in motion as a kind of safeguard. The only wonderful thing of the whole was that while Susan, without running, reached Marchmain with an incredible silent speed, and got in with her pulse high and her eyes shining, and the most profound amazement in her mind, Roger scarcely ever drew breath, on his part, till he had reached his own deserted house, though that was five miles off. Why they should have used such prodigious pains to get as far distant as possible from each other, in the shortest conceivable time, remains until this hour the mystery of that day.

CHAPTER VI.

That day was an important one to Roger Musgrave. To live in that Grange, a great, empty, deserted house, where every desolate apartment echoed to his footstep as if he were a dozen men, and which contained through all its ample rooms nothing but a rude table and chair in the library, where he took his solitary food, a truckle bed where he slept, and some homely implements for poor old Sally in the kitchen, which the unfortunate young man had redeemed out of his mother's twenty pounds—became at last and once for all impossible to him. That day, setting out for the only refuge of his idleness, a long walk, it had occurred to him to turn his steps in the direction of Marchmain, more from a passing

caprice than a serious intention. His kind old Colonel had been there—and there was the Colonel's niece, the pretty frank little girl, who had clapped her hands at his boyish exploit a year ago. The gratified vanity of that moment, his former curiosity to see Susan again, and her friendly mention of him to her uncle, warmed the young man into more earnestness as he approached the house. Seeing no one, and amazed at its utter solitude and sadness, he had turned away disappointed, when their meeting took place. Then, as we have already said, the young man hurried home. When he arrived there he kept walking up and down the empty library, till the old house rung again, and old Sally believed the young squire was "a-gooin' out of his mind." But he was not doing any such thing; he was only repeating to himself that it was impossible!—impossible! that it was against nature, and a discredit to his own character; that he could no longer wait for what other people were doing for him; that this very day he must leave the Grange. What his meeting with Susan had to do with hastening this

resolution it is quite impossible to tell; he did not know himself; but the conclusion was beyond disputing. He felt a feverish restlessness possess him—he could not remain even another night, though the morning certainly would have seemed a wiser time for setting out upon his journey. He pushed aside the chop which old Sally, with much care and all the skill her old hands retained, had prepared for him, and began to write. He wrote to his mother, who had recovered all her original place in his affections, a short cheerful note, to say that he was going to London, and would write to her from thence. Then he indited less easily a letter to the Colonel, in which, with all the eloquence he possessed, he represented the impossibility of remaining where he was. He described, with natural pathos, the empty house, the desecrated home, the listless life of idleness he was leading. He said, with youthful inconsequence, strong in the feeling of the moment, that, thrown back upon himself as he had been all these lonely days, he no longer cared for rank, nor desired to keep up a pretence of superior station,

which he could not support. "In what am I better than a private soldier?" he wrote, with all the swell and impulse of his full young heart: "worse, in so far that I am neither trained to my weapons, nor used to obedience —better in nothing but an empty name!" And with all that facile philosophy with which young men comfort the bitterness of their disappointments, the lad wrought himself up to a heroical pitch, by asking himself and the Colonel why he should not serve his country as well in the ranks as among their commanders. Why, indeed? The fever of his excitement mounted into his brain. When he finished his letter he was in all the fervour of that self-sacrificing sentiment which is so dear to youth. He went upstairs and packed his clean linen—a goodly store, all unlike the equipment of a private soldier—with some few other necessaries, into a travelling-bag. Then he went down to the great deserted kitchen, where poor old Sally sat "like a crow in the mist" by the chimney corner, her morsel of attenuated fire gleaming faintly across the cold floor. Sally got up

and curtseyed when the young master entered. She was a little old woman, bent and feeble, but she had lived there almost all her life, and it would have broken Sally's heart to be sent away from the Grange. She stood before him with her withered hands crossed upon her white apron, wondering in her dim thoughts whether there might be something to complain of in the dinner she had prepared. Behind her spread all the hospitable provisions of the rich man's kitchen, the arrangements which spoke of liberal entertainment, assembly of guests above and crowd of servants below; all black, cold, and desolate, unlighted save by the early wintry twilight from the windows and the superannuated glimmer of Sally's fire; and the emptiness and vacancy went with a chill and an ache to Roger's heart.

"Sally," said the young man, courageously, "I shall not give you any more trouble for a long time. You must keep the house as well as you can, and make yourself as comfortable as possible. Don't make the old place a show for strangers, now that it's desolate. See, Sally, here's for your present needs, and when I am settled I will send you more."

"I allays said it," said the old woman, "ye can ask Betty Gilsland. I said, says I, 'the young maister, take my word,'ll no bide here.' Ay, ay, ay, I allays said it—and you see it's coomed true."

Saying these words, Sally went off into a feeble little outburst of tears, and repeated her affirmation a third time, holding the money he had given her in her hand as if she did not know what to do with it. At last her ideas, such as they were, collected themselves. She made another curtsey.

"And where are you a-gooing, maister?" she said, looking earnestly into his face.

"To make my fortune, Sally," said the young man, with a smile which trembled between boldness and tears.

"And Amen—and grit may the fortin' be!" cried the old woman. "Have ye eaten your dinner?"

This was too much for the young man; he burst into a hysterical laugh, grasped her withered hand, shook it rapidly, and hurried away. The poor old body toiled up the stairs after him, to make sure that "the sneck was

in the door—for them young things are that careless!" said poor old Sally; then she went back again to her kitchen, and looked at the money, and, after an interval, perceiving what had happened, fell a-sobbing and crying in her solitude, and praying "the Lord bless him!" and "the Lord be gude to him!" as she rocked herself in her wooden chair. He who, out of all that poverty and sadness, and stupor of old age, heard these ejaculations, is no respecter of persons, and it was not without a true benediction that Roger Musgrave left his home.

When he was out upon the high road he turned back to look at the Grange. The evening was dark and favoured him. The day had been mild, and early spring quickened and rustled among those trees, warming to the very tips of their branches with that invisible and silent life which should shortly make them green. There they stood clustering in mutual defence against the night wind, with the high-pitched gable-roof of the old house looking out from among them, and the black belt of firs behind filling up the breaks in their

softer outline. By-and-bye, as Roger lingered in that last wistful look, he could see a small, unsteady light wandering from window to window. It was poor old Sally shutting the shutters, murmuring to herself that it was always so when the family were from home. There was something in the action symbolical and significant to Roger; it was the shutting up of the old house, the closing of the old refuge, the audible and visible sentence forbidding the return which up to that moment had been possible: he turned away with tears in his eyes, slung his travelling-bag over his strong shoulders, and setting his face to the wind, sped away through the dark country roads to the little new-built railway town, with its inns and labourers' cottages. It was quite dark when he got there; the lights dazzled him, and the noise of the coffee-room into which he went filled him with disgust in his exalted and excited state of feeling. Strangely enough as it appeared to him, a recruiting party had possession of the inn; a swaggering sergeant with parti-coloured ribbons went and came between the coffee-room and the bar,

where a batch of recruits were drowning their regrets and compunctions in oceans of beer. Roger went out, with a strange mixture of disgust and curiosity, to look at them. He could not observe, and criticize, and despise as Horace Scarsdale could have done; he found no amusement in the coarse self-reproach of one, the sullen obstinacy of another, the reckless gaiety with which a third put off his repentance till to-morrow. The din of their pretended enjoyment was pathetic and melancholy to Roger; but, amid all, he could not help the thought which occurred to him again and again—"Am I to be the comrade of these unfortunate blockheads?—are these my brothers-in-arms?"

And then, quick as thought, another picture presented itself to him. He thought of the Colonel, with his kind solicitous face, his stoop of attention, and the smile which lighted up his fatherly eyes when he spoke of his boy, whom he should hope to see Roger's brother-in-arms. For the moment he saw before him, not the flaring lights and clumsy figures of this rude company, but the dim inn-

parlour, with its poor candles, and the benign old stranger with his paternal smile. The young man could not bear it. He said to himself sternly, "This must not be!" and dismissed the contrast which distracted him from his mind with a violent effort. Then he made his way into the half-lighted railway-station, where everything lay dark and silent, a stray porter making ghostly appearance across the rails, and an abysm of darkness on either side, out of which, and into which, now and then plunged the red-eyed ogre of a passing train. In answer to his inquiries, he found that the night-train to London stopped here to take up passengers in the middle of the night. He made a homely supper in the inn, and then came outside, to the station, to wait for it. There he paced up and down, watching the coming and going of short trains here and there, the hurried clambering up, and the more leisurely descent of rural passengers, upon whom the light fell coldly as they went and came. The roar and rustle with which some one-eyed monster, heard long before seen, came plunging and snorting out of the

darkness, and all the rapid, shifting, phantasmagoria, of that new fashion of the picturesque which belongs to modern times. The wind blew chill from the open country, with a shrill and piercing concentration of cold through the narrow bar of the little station. By-and-bye the lights diminished, the noises stilled, nobody was left in the place but himself, a drowsy clerk in the little office, and some porters sleeping on the benches. Roger, for his part, could not sleep; he kept in motion, marching up and down the short, resounding, wooden platform, urged by the midnight cold, and by his thoughts, until his weary vigil was concluded by the arrival of his train. Then he, too, plunged like everybody else into darkness, into the mysterious midnight road, with dark London throbbing and shouting at the end; into life and his fate.

CHAPTER VII.

On the same day, and in a manner not very dissimilar, Horace Scarsdale left his home.

If that could be called home which had been for years a prison to the young man. With a secret feeling of exultation, he collected everything belonging to him into a trunk, which he confided, without much explanation, into the hands of Peggy. "When I send for this give it to my messenger," said Horace. Peggy was prudent, and nodded in assent, without asking any question. She had divined for some time that he meant to go away, and Peggy, who thought it the best thing he could do, prepared to remain in ignorance; and to have no information to give her master in case he should think of questioning her. Susan

had not yet returned from her walk; there was no one in the house but Mr. Scarsdale, shut up as usual in his study, and Peggy looking out anxiously, but stealthily, unwilling to be seen, or suspected of watching her young master, when Horace left the house. He, too, carried a little bag—and he, too, when he had got half-way across the moor, turned round to look at the house in which the greater part of his life had been spent. Looking back, no tender images softened in the mind of Horace the harsh and angular outline of those unsheltered walls; he had no associations to make sweet to him the dwelling of his youth. He drew a long, deep breath of satisfaction. He had escaped, and he was young, and life was bright before him. As he stood there, too far off to be called back, with his bag lying at his feet among the brown heather, he could see Peggy steal out to the corner of the house and look up and down the road to see which way he had gone, with her hand over her eyes, to shield them from the sun: and then another lighter figure came quickly, with an agitated speed, to the door, and stood there in

the sunshine, without looking round her at all, waiting for admittance. Horace contracted his eyebrows over his short-sighted eyes, and smiled to recognize his sister—smiled, but not with affection or pleasure. Perhaps it heightened for the moment his own sense of liberation to see that poor little bird going back to her cage; perhaps he imagined her consternation and alarm and amazement on finding him gone. When Peggy had gone in from her corner, and Susan had disappeared into the house, Horace took up his bag and pursued his way. He was not going any great distance; his destination, for this time at least, was only Kenlisle, where he arrived in the afternoon, after a long walk, made pleasant by the sense of freedom, which increased as step by step he increased the distance between himself and Marchmain.

Horace had not frequented the rural alehouses and listened to the rural talk for nothing. He knew, as far as popular report could tell him, all about the leading people of the district: he knew, what seldom comes to the ears of their equals, except in snatches,

what their servants said about them, and all the details and explications which popular gossip gave of every occurrence important enough to catch the public eye. All this, long before he thought of making use of it, Horace noted and remembered by instinct; it amused him to hear of the follies and vices of other people; it amused him to distinguish, in the popular criticism upon them, how much of the righteous indignation was envy, and a vain desire to emulate the pleasant sins which were out of that disapproving public's reach. By this means he knew a great deal more about the social economy of the district than anybody who knew his manner of life would have supposed possible. He had heard, for example, numberless allusions made to a notable attorney, or solicitor, as he called himself, in Kenlisle, who managed everybody's affairs, and knew the secrets of the whole county. It was he to whom Horace intended addressing himself; a romantic idea, one would have supposed; for he was a prosperous man, and was not very likely to prefer a penniless individual in young Scarsdale's position to a rich towns-

man's son, with premiums and connections. However, the young man was strong in the most undaunted self-confidence—an idea of failure never crossed his mind. He made as careful a *toilette* as he could at the inn, had himself brushed with great care, and, pausing no longer than was absolutely necessary for these operations, proceeded at once to the solicitor's office. Here Horace presented himself, by no means in the humble guise of a man who seeks employment. Business hours were nearly over—the young men in Mr. Pouncet's office had clustered round one desk, the occupant of which was performing some piece of amateur jugglery, to the immense admiration of his colleagues. These accomplished young men dispersed in haste at the appearance of a stranger. Mr. Pouncet was known to be disengaged, and Horace asked for him with a confidence and authority which imposed even upon the managing clerk. After a very little delay he was ushered into the attorney's sanctuary, where Mr. Pouncet himself, business being over, read the papers in his elbow-chair. Mr. Pouncet had none of Colonel Su-

therland's objections to Horace's stooping shoulders. He bowed, and invited him to take a chair, without the least unfavourable comment on the appearance of his visitor. Then the lawyer laid down his paper, took off his spectacles, and assumed the proper look of professional attention. Horace saw he had made a favourable beginning, and rose in courage as he began to speak.

"I have come to consult you about some matters of much importance to me," he said. "I am forced to adopt a profession, though I ought to have no need for any such thing. I have determined to adopt yours, Mr. Pouncet. I have a long explanation to make before you can understand the case—have you time to hear me?"

"Certainly," said the lawyer, but not with effusion; for the preface was not very encouraging to his hopes of a new client.

"My father lives not very far off, at Marchmain, on the borders of Lanwoth Moor," said Horace, and made a pause at the end of these words.

A look of increased curiosity rewarded him.

"Ah, Mr. Scarsdale? I remember to have heard the name," said the attorney, taking up his pen, playing with it, and at last, as if half by inadvertence, making a note upon a sheet of paper.

"He lives a life of mystery and seclusion," said Horace; "he has some secret which he guards from me; he says it is unnecessary for me to support myself, and yet his own establishment is poor. What am I to do?—life is insupportable at Marchmain. My uncle wishes me to proceed to London, to read for the bar. I confess my ambition does not direct me towards the bar. I see no necessity for losing my best years in labour which, when I discover all, will most likely be useless to me. Here is what I want to do: I wish to remain near; I wish to attain sufficient legal knowledge to be able to follow this mystery out. Such is my case plainly; what ought I to do?"

Mr. Pouncet gave a single, sharp glance at Horace, then resumed his scribbling on his paper, drawing fantastic lines and flourishes, and devoting a greater amount of attention to

these than to his answer. "Really, I find it difficult to advise," he said, in a tone which meant plainly that he perceived his client had something more to say. "Take your uncle's advice."

"No," said Horace; "you will receive me into your office."

"I—I am much obliged, it would be an honour; but my office is already full," said Mr. Pouncet, with a little quiet sarcasm; "I have more clerks than I know what to do with."

"Yes, these fellows there," said Horace—"I can see it; but I am of very different mettle; you will find a place for me; wait a little, you will soon see your advantage in it."

"You have a very good opinion of yourself, my young friend," said the lawyer, laughing dryly, with a little amazement, and a little anger.

"I have," said Horace, laconically; "I know what I can do. Look here—I am not what I have been brought up to appear; there is something in my future which my father envies and grudges me; I know it!—and it

must be worth his while; he's not a man to waste his ill-temper without a good cause; very likely there's an appeal to the law before me, when I know what this secret is. You can see what stuff I am made of. I don't want to go to London, to waste time and cultivate a profession; the chances are I shall never require it—give me a place here!"

"Your request is both startling and unreasonable," said Mr. Pouncet, putting down his pen, and looking his visitor full in the face. "I have reason to complain of a direct imposition you have practised upon me. You come as a client, and then you ask for employment; it is absurd. I have young men in my office of most excellent connections—each of them has paid me a premium; and you think the eccentricity of your demand will drive me into accepting you, whom I never saw before; the thing is quite absurd."

"I beg your pardon," said Horace, coolly; "I am not asking for employment—I am your client, seeking your advice; here is your fee. I ask you, whether this is not what you would advise me, as the best thing I could do. As

for premium, I don't care for that. If I am not worth half-a-dozen of these lads, to any man who knows how to employ me, it is a very odd thing to me. Now, understand me, sir: I have left home—I wish to conclude what I am to do at once; if not in your office, in some other; can you find a place for me here?"

The lawyer took a pinch of snuff, rose up, went to the window, came back, and after a variety of other restless movements sat down again. During this interval he turned over all that Horace had said, and something more: he made a hurried run over the highly-condensed summary of law reports in his brain, in a vain hunt after the name of Scarsdale. "Most probably a will case," he said to himself. Then he turned once more his eyes on Horace. The young man met that inspection without wavering. What the inquisitor found in that face was certainly not candour and openness of expression; he looked not with a human, but a professional eye. Perhaps it occurred to him that his visitor's boast was something more than a brag, and that one

such unscrupulous and acute assistant in his office would be worth much more to him than his articled clerks, who teased the life out of his unfortunate manager, and even puzzled himself. Then, "to do him this favour would be to bind him to me in the commonest gratitude," was the inarticulate reflection which passed through the mind of the attorney; forgetting entirely, as the most sagacious men forget, that the qualities which would make Horace a useful servant were not such as consist with sentiments like gratitude. On the whole, the young man's assurance, coupled with the known mystery that surrounded Marchmain, and the popular report of some great law-suit in which Mr. Scarsdale had once been concerned, imposed upon the lawyer. He kept repeating in his mind, Scarsdale *versus* —— Scarsdale against ——, but could not find any name which would satisfy him fo the other party to the suit. After some indifferent questions, he dismissed Horace, promising him an answer next day, with which the young man left him, calmly triumphant—and, as it appeared, with reason. Mr. Pouncet

could not resist the bait of a probable struggle at law, and all the *éclat* of a prolonged and important suit. He determined over and over again that Horace had a clever face, and might be of the greatest use to him. He found that he had for some time wanted some one who should be entirely devoted to himself —ready to pick up any information, to make any observation, to do whatever he wanted. He concluded at last that this was the very person; and when Horace came in next day he found himself engaged. The following morning he took his place among the others in the office. Thus he too had entered upon his life.

CHAPTER VIII.

"EYEH, man! and that's a' the geed ye've done? If I had but had the sense to ging mysel'! Where's my son? Black be the day ye coom across this door, ye bletherin' Ould Hunderd! Where's my Sam? Eyeh, my purty boy, that was aye handy to a' things, and ne'er a crooked word in his mouth but when you crossed him, and a temper like an angel? Where's my Sam? Do you mean to tell me you've gane and you've coomed, John Gilsland, and brought nae guid news in your hand?"

"The devil's i' the woman!" cried honest John. "Could I lay the lad on the front o' the mare, and bring him hame like a sack o' corn? He's sorry enough and sick enough by

this time, if that's a consolation; but do you think it was me to face the sodger officers, and say he bud not to list?—and him *had* listed, if I preached till the morn. Na, wife, he's fast and sure—as fast as the Ould Hunderd himsel'. If ye'll take my advice, the best thing you can do is to put up his bundle and make him commforable. He's brewed, and so must he drink. It's for better, for warse, like the marriage state itsel'."

"And grand I would be taking *your* advice!" said the landlady, more from habit than anger; "and a grand joodge you would mak' o' what a mother'll do for her son! Eyeh, away! I've nae pleasure in man nor woman. Oh, my Sammy! and after all the pains the Colonel took to speak a word to the lad himsel'; and after all his schooling and what was done for him; and a new waistcoat and buttons I bought him mysel' but a week agoo; and everything he could set his face to to make him commforable. Oh! Sammy, Sammy! what will ye say when your mother's grey hairs is brought to the grave in sorrow along o' you? I'll tear the een out o' that

murderin'. Ould Hunderd if he come near this door!—I will! if he was the best customer in twenty mile. What do I care for his dribble of drink and his deceiving tongue? If it hadn't been for him, I would ne'er have lost my Sammy, the best lad, though I say it as shouldn't, and the cleverest, ye could set your eyes on. I could have trusted him with every key in the house, I could; and the modestest lad! Praise him to his face, and he would colour up like a girl. If I had but had the sense to ging and speak to the offisher mysel'!"

"Eyeh, woman, if ye but had!" said John, "ye would have knowed better; yon'er he is fast enough, and no a penny less than thirty pound 'll buy him off, and ye know best yoursel' if ye can spare that off of the business in such bad times; but there's mair as bad off as you. And I can tell you I saw greater folk nor our Sam look wistful at the ribbons. As I sat down by the chimney side, who should come in but Mr. Roger, him that should be the young Squire by rights, if the ould wan had done fairly by him. He stood

i' the door, as I might be dooing, and gave a look athwart the place. If he warn't envying of the lads as could 'list, and no more said, never trust my word again. I'll bet a shilling he was in twenty minds to take the bounty himsel'. Though he is a gentleman, he's a deal worse off nor our Sam; he'll goo hanging about in London, till the great folk doo somat for him. He durstent set for'ard bold, and into the ranks wi' him. I'm more grieveder like, in a general way, for the sort of him nor our lad. Dry thy een, wife, and set on a great wash, and take it out on th' wench; it'll do thee good, and thoo canst do nae benefit to Sam."

Mrs. Gilsland, though she contradicted her husband as usual, found some wisdom in his advice, and, after doing something elaborately the reverse for a time, adopted it, to the discomfiture of her poor maid-of-all-work, who might not have appreciated her master's counsel had she been aware of it. A good scold did the landlady good; she sought out poor Sam's wardrobe, collected a little heap of articles to be washed and mended for him,

and managed, by this means, to get through the day with tolerable comfort, though interrupted by many gossiping visits of condolence, in all of which she renewed and expatiated upon her grief. When the evening arrived, Mrs. Gilsland was in considerable force, with red eyes, and face a little swollen, but strong in all her natural eloquence and courage, lying in wait for the arrival of the unsuspecting "Ould Hunderd," who had not yet been informed, so far as she was aware of, what had taken place. Before he made his appearance, however, there arrived the carrier from Kenlisle, who made a diversion in her excitement. He brought a note from Horace Scarsdale to John Gilsland, enclosing an open one, addressed to Peggy at Marchmain, and requested her to send his trunk with the bearer; a communication which very much roused the curiosity of both husband and wife. While they were considering this billet, Sergeant Kennedy came in as usual, and got his place, and his pipe, in the public room, without calling forth any demonstration of hostilities. When she became aware of his presence, Mrs.

Gilsland rushed into the apartment, with the note still in her hand.

"Eyeh, gude forgive me if I'm like to swear!" cried the indignant mother, "you're here, ye ould deceiver! You're here to beguile other folks's sons, and dare to look me in the face as if ye had ne'er done mischief in your days. Where's my Sam? Where's my lad, that never had an ill thought intill his head till he came to speech of you? Well did the Cornel say ye wur an ould humbug! Where's my son?"

"Husht! husht!" said the Sergeant, soothingly—"I have heard on't already in the town. I always said he was a lad of spirit—he'll make a good souldhier, and some day ye'll be proud enough to see him in his uniform. Husht, would you have the onlearned believe he had 'listed in drink, or because of ill-doing? You're an oncommon discreet woman when ye like. Think of the poor lad's credit, then, and hould your peace. Would you make the foulks think he 'listed like a ne'er-do-well? Husht, if any person says so of Sam Gilsland to me, Sergeant Kennedy, o' the Ould Hunderd, I'll knock him down."

This sudden new aspect of the subject took away the good woman's breath; she was not prepared for so skilful a defence, since, to blame her son in blaming Kennedy, was the last thing she could have thought of. After a few moments she recovered herself, but not the full advantage she had started with.

"I said you was a deceiver, and it's proved upon me," said Mrs. Gilsland; "and you think you can take me in with your lyin' tongue as well as my boy! How dare ye speak of drink or ill-doing and my Sam?—a steadier lad was never born; he's no' like you, you ould sponge that you are, soaking in whatever's gooing in the way of liquor. He's no as long-tongued nor as acquaint with ill; and but for coming across of you when the lad knowed no better, and taking a' your stories for Gospel, he'd ha' been here this day. And you sit and lift up your face to me in my own house, you do! Ye ould storyteller!—ye cruel deceiver!—ye onnat'ral ould man! You a feyther yoursel' and make other foulks's house desolate! But what need I speak?—there's wan there forenenst ye, that cares

little more nor you do, for all the lad I'm naming is his son as well as mine!" . .

This sudden attack took the unfortunate John entirely by surprise; he recoiled a step or two, with an exclamation of amazement and injury. He had been standing calmly by, enjoying the unusual pleasure of listening to his wife's eloquence as a spectator, and rather rejoicing in the castigation of the sergeant. This assault took away his breath—nor was it allowed to remain a single blow. Before anyone could speak, an old cracked, high-pitched voice made itself heard from the door of the apartment, where, shivering with cold, and anger, and age, with an old checked shawl thrown over her cap, old Sally from the Grange shook her withered and trembling hand at the unhappy John.

"It's you that's a-spreading tales against the young maister—it's you!" she cried, in her shrill accents; "and it's you, Betty Gilsland, that's puttin' him up to it; you that's eaten the Squire's bread, and married on his present, and thrived wi' his coostom. Fie upon me for a silly ould fool, that thought

there was such a thing as thankfulness to the fore in this world! Eh, man! to think ye should have come coorting to the Grange kitchen, many's the day, and eaten your commforable supper wi' the rest on us, and yet have the heart to turn again Mr. Roger, like the gentry themsels! I would not have believed it if half the sheer had ta'en their Bible oath—no, not for nothing but hearing on it mysel'. What ill did he ever doo you, that you should raise a story on Mr. Roger? Oh, fie, fie, fie, for shame!"

The husband and wife looked at each other in mutual amazement at this unexpected charge, while Kennedy pricked up his ears and recovered his former boldness. He did not doubt now to come out of the affair with flying colours; for though John Gilsland's reflections on the looks of Roger when he encountered him the previous night had been overheard and carried rapidly to the interested ears of Sally, the sergeant was still unaware both of Roger's purpose and his departure. He inclined his ear with great attention to Sally's complaint; he cocked his cap upon

one side of his head, and assumed the part of moderator with a masterly promptitude; he called her in, waving his hand to her, and set a stool for her near the fire.

"It's mortial cowld," said the sergeant, "here's a drop of beer for you, ould Sally. Them good foulks there, take my word, had no ill maening to Mr. Roger. We'll al' hear the rights on it. Many's the talk I've had with him, and many's the good advice I gave the young man. Onexperienced lads they're al'ways the better of a good advice. Take a drop of beer."

Sally made a nervous, frightened curtsey, warmed her icy fingers at the fire, and took the beer in her hand, with her respects to the sergeant; but before she could drink it Mrs. Gilsland arrested her with a sudden exclamation.

"Sally! touch you none on it—it's pisoned—it's Judas—it's a-betraying on you!" cried the landlady; "if there's harm come to your young gentleman, who should it be but him there? He's seduced away my innocent lad. He's led Sam astray, and putten it into

his head to 'list and goo for a souldhier. He's nothing but lies and deceits from end to end on him. If there's harm to the young Squire, you take my word, it's *him!*"

"Lord have a care of us!" cried Sally, emphasizing her exclamation by a violent start, and dropping the glass from her hands; "pisoned!—eh, the cannibal! the murderin' villain!—and what harm did I ever do to him, a puir old body like me?"

Upon which text the excellent Mrs. Gilsland made a renewed onslaught upon the sergeant, referring directly or indirectly to his influence all the accidents of the country side. If he was in some way to blame for the failed crops and the potato disease, he was evidently first cause that Mr. Roger had left the Grange, and her boy had gone away; both were entirely under the influence of the all-conquering sergeant. John Gilsland stood by a little nervous, but secretly enjoying the attack which old Sally, easily diverted from her indignation against himself, and turning her arms upon "th' Ould Hunderd," aided with all her feeble forces. The other spectators en-

couraged the combatants with vociferous plaudits. As for the sergeant, he gave his cap a fiercer cock, crossed his arms upon his breast, sat back upright as a post in his chair, and puffed mighty volumes of smoke from his pipe. It was impossible to move him. When at last, in sheer exasperation and rage, the women found nothing more to say, Kennedy took the pipe from his mouth, thrust his chair farther back, and made his exculpatory address:—

"If you will listen to me," said the sergeant, stretching forth his arms, and laying down the plan of his discourse with the fingers of one hand upon the palm of the other, "I'll make you my answer under three heads; There's, firstly, Sam Gilsland — and there's, secondly, Mr. Roger—and there's, thirdly, the Cornel. As ye cannot onderstand the first till ye've heard the last, I advise ye to have patience. Then, in the first place, Sam —he's a very fine lad, clean, well-made, a good figure, a good spirit, fond to be out o' dours, and to see the world. I'll say, before a hunder faothers and maothers, it's a disgrace

to keep a man like that serving beer. He behooved to serve his country, did a lad like that; thinks I to mysel', there's a figure for a uniform; if the drill-sergeant had his will o' him, there's hands would be clever at their weapons! Was it my fault that his Maker had made him straight and strong? He heard me speak of the service, sure; I'm a man of experience; I see no good reason to hide my light away from the world; and natur' up and spoke. I knowed no more of his going away nor the babe unborn."

The wily sergeant saw with the corner of his eye that Sam's mother, overcome by this eloquence, had fallen to crying—he knew the day was won.

"*And* I ask ye a'," said the sergeant, "when a man that's served his country sets foot among ye, with the Queen's coat on his back, and a medal on his breast, do ye turn your backs upon him? Is he not as great a man as the Duke till his furlough's done; *and* I ask *you*," continued Kennedy, turning boldly round upon his principal accuser, "when the boy comes to end his life in aise and comfort,

with a pension to keep him snug, and never to move his hand but when he pleases—would ye rather he was looking after the farmers' horses, good weather and bad weather, and serving beer?"

Mrs. Gilsland was overcome; flattering fancies stole over her mind; splendid visions of a figure in uniform, with honours and rewards heaped upon him by the public gratitude, which should call her mother; she put up her apron to her eyes and sobbed. The sergeant was victorious.

"And as for Mr. Roger, I am not the man to meddle with them that are aboon my hand—I gave him my advice, like any other speerited young man," said the sergeant; "I tould him my mind of the service. I tould him there was glory and fame to be found in the profession of arms. He was very well inclined to lead me on, was Mr. Roger; he asked about this one and he asked me about the t'other one, and I gave the young gentleman what information I could. And then, ye see, al' at once, out of my knowledge, comes up the Cornel. I cannot purtend to say what

business he had here. There was some story about a nevvy of his, Mr. Horry, that ye al' knowe. I've no very great faith in Mr. Horry, for my own account. My belief is—for he never spared pains or trouble for his men, as I can well say—my belief is, if ye ask me, that the Cornel heard there was some promising lads here, and came to take a look at them himself. That's just my fixed opinion, if ye ask me. So there's Sam away, and Mr. Roger away, and I'll lay any man here a hunder pounds we'll hear tell of the Cornel again."

"Eyeh, man! d'ye think it's true?" cried Mrs. Gilsland. "I asked the Cornel to speak to my Sam mysel'. Eyeh, sergeant! it's an awfu' misfortune—but it's a great honour! Do ye think it would be *that* that brought the Cornel here?"

John Gilsland was more sceptical than his wife; but, at the same time, he was more favourable. "Here's Mr. Horry gone his gate also," said John—"I'm strong o' the mind to take the cart mysel', and goo round by Marchmain the morn for his trunk as he bids, and see if I can see owght o' the ould man."

"Thoo'st aye right ready for a ploy," said his wife, "a deal better than honest work. Eyeh, but it's true—Mr. Horry has gane as well —three young men of them out of this wan place! Blees me! its awful like as if the Cornel was at the bottom o't, after all."

"Ay, ay—you'll come into my opinion. I seed him three times mysel'. The Cornel was aye an affable gentleman, and spoke his mind free; I knows what I knows," said the sergeant—"he had his own occasions here."

"Come you with me, Sally, and you shall have a cup o' tea to comfort your heart," said Mrs. Gilsland. "Eyeh, woman, I'm heart-broken; but I'm glad!—three on them, and his own nevvy! That Mr. Horry is a rael queer lad—he takes no more notice of a body nor if they were the dust beneath his feet; but dreedful clever, there's no doubt. I'll make John goo himsel' to Marchmain as he said—maybe there's some news. Keep a good heart about the young Squire, Sally. I would not say but them three they're all together, and the Cornel with them; and they're rael well off, if *he's* there, that's for certain; such a man!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day John Gilsland and his cart took their leisurely way across the moor, carrying with them the note which Horace had addressed to Peggy at Marchmain.

Horace had now been gone two days. The afternoon of the day on which he left home Peggy confided her suspicions on this subject to Susan, who was struck with alarm and terror, quite out of proportion to the event. Where had he gone?—what would he do?—and what, oh! what would papa say? Susan sat by herself in the dining-room, vainly trying to work; and now that there was so little likelihood of hearing his footstep, watching for it with the

most breathless eagerness. Evening came, and the dreaded hour of dinner; exactly at six o'clock Mr. Scarsdale took his seat at the head of the table. Horace's chair was placed as usual, and stood empty by the side. Mr. Scarsdale gave one glance at the empty seat, as he took his own, but said nothing. Susan could not help remembering the only former time when that place was vacant, the day so happy and so miserable, when Uncle Edward first came to Marchmain. As on that occasion, his father took no notice of the absence of Horace; the dinner was eaten in silence, Susan swallowing a sob with every morsel which she ate, and trembling as she had trembled before her father ever since the interview in which he forbade her correspondence with her uncle, and she refused to obey him. That scene had never departed from her mind—her own guilty feeling had never subsided. Bearing on her conscience her first real personal offence against her father, it was impossible for Susan now to have any confidence even in their accustomed stillness. She felt a continual insecurity when he was present—at any moment

he might address to her these commands and reproaches again.

But the evening passed as usual, without any interruption; once more Mr. Scarsdale sat motionless at the table, as he had done every evening in Susan's remembrance, with his book set up on the little reading-desk, and the crystal jug with his claret, reflecting itself in the shining table. And there sat Susan opposite him, somehow afraid to-night to bring out her embroidery-frame, or to employ herself with any of the pretty things which Uncle Edward had bought for her—taking once more, with timidity, and half afraid that he would notice even that, her neglected patchwork, out of her large, old work-bag. Susan had been trimming up for her own use, with great enjoyment of the task, with linings of blue silk, and scraps of ribbon found in one of Peggy's miscellaneous hoards, an old, round work-basket, which she had found in the upper room where the apples were kept. But she did not venture to put that ornamental article, so simply significant as it was of the rising tide of her young feminine life, upon the table.

She bent over her neglected patchwork, smoothing it out, and laying the pieces together, but somehow finding it entirely impossible to fix her attention upon them. She could not help watching her father, shaking with terror when, in putting down her scissors, or her cotton, she disturbed the profound stillness; she could not help listening intently for those sounds outside which betokened to her accustomed ear the approach of Horace. She longed, and yet she feared to see her brother come back again; she could not believe he had really gone away; she wondered, till her head ached, where he could be; and could not bring herself to realize anything more cheerful about him than an aimless wandering through that dreary moor, or through the cold cheerless dark streets described in some of her novels, which two things the poor child connected together with an unreasonable ignorance. Then came the dismal tea-making. The night went on—it grew late, but still Mr. Scarsdale kept his seat. Midnight, dark, cold, solitary night, with the fire going out, the candles burned to the sockets, and Peggy,

as all was still, supposed to be in bed. Then Mr. Scarsdale closed his book. "It is quite time you should have gone to rest," he said. "Why do you start?—is there anything astonishing in what I say? Good night!"

Susan got up instantly, stumbled towards the side-table, got her candle, and lighted it with a trembling hand. She went out of the room so quickly, and in such evident trepidation, that the sight of her terror struck another arrow into her father's mind. He looked after her with a pale, dreadful smile. "She is afraid of me!" said the forlorn man. He said the words aloud, and Susan came back trembling to the door, to ask if he called her. His "No!" drove her to her room with hurried steps, and limbs which could scarcely carry her. Susan was so terrified that she could not rest; she put her candle in her room, and came out to look over the rail of the little gallery from which the bed-chambers opened. There, standing in the dark, after a little interval, she saw her father come out of the dining-room, with his candle in his hand, and go to the door, which he barred and bolted,

with a precaution Susan had never known to be taken before. Then she heard him securing the shutters of the windows. With an infallible instinct of alarm and terror, she knew that it was against the return of Horace that all these precautions were taken. She stole into her room, closed the door noiselessly, and looked out. Black in its unbroken midnight of gloom lay the moor, a waste of desolate darkness on every side, rain falling, masses of black clouds sweeping over the sky, a shrill gleam of the windy horizon far away, shining over the top of the distant hills. And Horace, if he should be near, if he should still be coming home, remorselessly shut out! Susan sat up half the night, listening with a nervous terror to all the mysterious sounds which creep and creak in the absolute silence of the dead hours of night. Horace was most comfortably asleep in a comfortable room in the "George," at Kenlisle, while his poor sister sat wrapped in a big shawl, trying to keep awake, thinking she heard his footsteps approaching the house, and waiting only to be certain before she should steal down-

stairs in the dark to open the door. Poor Susan fell fast asleep at last, and slept till long after her usual time; then she was roused by Peggy to just such another day. Mr. Scarsdale still did not say a word, though his glance at the empty chair was more sharp and eager. And so things continued till the forenoon of the third day, when John Gilsland stopped his cart at the door; and, calling for Peggy in his loud, hearty voice, which could be heard over all the house, informed the entire family of Marchmain that he had come for Mr. Horry's box.

Susan was with Peggy in the kitchen, solacing her anxieties by a discussion of where her brother could be, and what he was most likely to be doing. This summons made her jump, as she stood listlessly by the window. Peggy, without saying a word, made a stride to the side door, and went round to the corner of the house to confront this incautious messenger. Susan, trembling and afraid to join her, sprang up upon the wooden chair, and peeped out of the window. There she saw Peggy in the act of assaulting the unfortunate

John, shaking him by the shoulder, and demanding to know if *that* was the way to deliver a message at a gentleman's house. John scratched his head and shrugged his shoulders: he was too much accustomed to ill-usage from women to feel much resentment; he only looked sheepish, and, patting the mare on the shoulder, came round with Peggy to the side door. There she introduced him on tiptoe, taking elaborate precautions of quietness, which were all intended to impose upon John, and silence his heavy feet and country clogs to the greatest degree of silence possible.

"It's not so heavy but what a man like you can carry it down on your shoulder," said Peggy; "and if ye make a bump on the road, Gude forgive ye, for I'll no, nor the master, if he's disturbed in his study. I would not advise you to rouse up *him*. Whisht then!—if you have any regard for your own peace, hold your tongue! In the very stairs, and the study no furder off nor yon door! If ye cannot be quiet, it's as much as your ears are worth!"

Thus warned, John went creaking on his

tiptoes upstairs, and was introduced to Mr. Horace's room, where the furniture had been specially arranged, and where the good order and trim array of everything made no small impression on his simplicity. John got downstairs again in safety, jealously watched by Peggy, who stamped her foot at him from the foot of the stairs, and produced the "bump" which she had deprecated by her super-caution. However, the business was performed in safety, the cart was drawn up to the side door, and Horace's goods safely deposited in it—Mr. Scarsdale, up to this moment, taking no notice of the proceeding. Then John returned into the kitchen, to have a little chat with Peggy, who was nothing loth. Peggy did all the marketing for the family, and though perfectly impenetrable and deaf to all questions about her master, was rather popular in the neighbouring villages, as a housekeeper and purveyor, who was not sparing in her provisions for her master's table, was like to be. John stood, with his hat in one hand and a glass of beer of Peggy's own brewing in the other, describing to Mr.

Scarsdale's factotum the events of the previous days—Th' young squire gone out of the Grange, no one knew where; his own son listed, and gone for a soldier; and Mr. Horry —ah! Mr. Horry was deep, he never let on of *his* secrets: he supposed the family knew where the young gentleman was.

Susan kept in the kitchen, hovering about the window, very anxious, but afraid, to ask questions, and listening to this volunteer gossip with all her ears. Peggy answered very brusquely to the inferred question of Horace's messenger.

"You may depend the family doesn't need to ask you," said Peggy. "Mak' haste, man, about your ain business—no wonder the wife has little patience if this is how you put off your time. How will ye send on the box?—that's all I'm wanting to hear."

"Oh, just by the carrier—to the 'George' at Kenlisle—it's none so far away either," said John; "if the family wanted word sent particular, I could goo a' the way mysel.'"

As he made this offer he threw an inquisitive glance at Susan, whose restless attention

he had skill enough to perceive. Peggy's answer was a violent shake of her head, as she went on with her work. John resumed.

"Our wife, she thinks it's a very strange thing that these three should be away at the same moment, as you may say. Not to compare our Sam to the young gentlemen, but you see Sam had a word himself with the Cornel. As for the young squire, he was coming and going the whole time, and Mr. Horry, he's nevvy to th' ould gentleman, as far as I can hear. It's a rael coorious thing —they all had speech o' the Cornel, and all started off on the same day. Maybe you and the young lady you ken a deal better nor that —but ye'll allow it's an awfu' coorious thing."

While John, pausing, looked for an answer in calm security of having said something which could not fail to make an impression; while Peggy, with her back to him, vigorously washed her dishes, clattering one upon another with emphasis, which, however, did not drown his voice, and was not intended to do so; and while Susan stood timidly with her work in her hand, startled with this new piece of

intelligence, and looking towards the stranger with a face full of wonder, a sudden sound startled the vigilant ear of Peggy. But she had scarcely time to put down the dinner-plate in her hand, and to wave her towel at John Gilsland, commanding imperatively a hasty retreat, when the door of the kitchen suddenly flew open, and Mr. Scarsdale himself, pale, erect, and passionate, his dressing-gown flying wide around him with "the wind of his going," his thin lips set together, and an expression of restrained and silent fury in his face, came abruptly into the room.

John recoiled a step in amazement and awe; then, emboldened by curiosity, kept his place, and made his bow to the master. Mr. Scarsdale stamped his foot on the floor in lack of words, and pointed to the door with a violent gesture; and before he knew what he was about, Peggy rushed against John, thrust him out before her, and closed and bolted the door after him. The amazed and sheepish look with which he rubbed his shoulders, and gazed at the inhospitable door from which he had been so summarily ex-

pelled, would have been worth a comic actor's while to see. The honest fellow stood outside, looking first at the house and then at his mare, with a ludicrous astonishment. "The devil's in the woman!" said John. That was a proposition not unfamiliar to him. Then in his blank bewilderment he marched gravely round the house, spying in at the vacant windows. Everything was empty except that kitchen, in which the pale spectre in the dressing-gown might be murdering the women for anything John knew. What should he do? After various pauses of troubled cogitations, John decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and chirruped to his mare. The two went off together, much discomfited, and the landlord of the "Tillington Arms" had full occupation for the rest of the road in amending the circumstances according to his fancy, and bringing himself into sufficient dignity and importance in the tale to make it meet for the ears of his wife.

When John Gilsland was disposed of, Mr. Scarsdale addressed himself to his daughter and his servant.

"I understand," he said, without speaking directly to either, "from his absence at table, and from the articles which I have just now seen taken out of the house, that Mr. Horace Scarsdale has chosen to leave Marchmain; I say nothing against that—he is perfectly welcome to choose his own residence; but I desire you to understand, both of you, that on no pretence whatever must this young man return into my house—not even for a visit; he has placed himself among those strangers whom I decline to admit. I make no complaint," added the recluse, coldly, "that my family conspire against me, and that messages are received, and my property sent away, without my knowledge."

"Master," said Peggy, while Susan stood trembling before her father, her work fallen from her hands, and her womanish fright and anguish falling into tears. "Master," exclaimed his old servant, who was not afraid of him, "you're no to leave that reproach on me. I've conspired against none of you, if it was my last word! Your son's gone, as he should have gone a dozen years ago, if ye had

been wise, or ta'en my advice. He's gone, and God's blessing and grit speed be with him! I never was more glad of nothing in my born days; and for his things in his box! —I knowed you a lad and a man, and a better man nor you are this day; but did I ever even it to you to keep back another man's, if it was a servant's claithes?"

"Be silent!" cried Mr. Scarsdale, putting his hand to his ears; "you conspire, you whisper, you hide in corners; there is not a soul in the world whom I can trust; but I beg you to understand, in respect to Horace Scarsdale, that I am master here, and that he shall not return to this house. He may say he wishes to see his sister—he does not care a straw for his sister! Do you comprehend me?—he is never again to enter here!"

Neither at first said a word, but Peggy advanced before her master and dropped him a grave curtsey. "You're master here," said Peggy; "never a word against your will, as has been proved for fifteen years, could wild horses get out of me. I've served you faithful, and I will. Bear your ain blame before

heaven, and the Lord forgive you, master. It's my hope he'll never seek to enter these darksome doors again."

Thus concluded the startling episode of Horace Scarsdale's departure from his father's house. Deeply wounded, in spite of herself, by her father's plain and cold statement that Horace did not care a straw for his sister, Susan went back to her now unbroken solitude. Perhaps it was true, but it was not the less cruel to say it; and now that he was gone Susan's heart clung to her brother. She tried to remember that he had been sometimes kind to her; it was hard to collect instances, and yet Horace, too, like other people, had been moved by caprice sometimes in his life, and *had* done things once or twice contrary to the tenor of his character. And her whole nature revolted against the unnatural prohibition which debarred his return. There she sat, poor child, in that dreary room, certain now that no voice but her father's should ever break its silence—that nobody but he should ever sit opposite to her at table; and if her heart sank within her, as she tried in vain

to occupy herself with her needlework, it was not wonderful. She thought of Horace, and Roger Musgrave, and Sam Gilsland, with a sigh — she wondered whether John was right; and with almost a pang of jealousy wondered still more that her uncle should take pains to liberate these three, while yet he did not try to do anything for *her*. She could not work—she tried her novels, but she had read them all, and in them all there was not one situation so forlorn and hopeless as her own. Poor Susan threw herself on her knees, with her face against the prickly hair-cloth of the elbow-chair—not to pray, but to bewail herself, utterly disheartened, angry and hopeless! Her temper was roused; she was cross and bitter, and full of unkindly thoughts; she felt as if she herself loved nobody, as nobody loved her. By-and-bye, when a sense of her attitude struck her, with its appearance of devotion, and the strangely contrary feelings of her mind, she sprang to her feet in a passion of sobs and tears, feeling more guilty and miserable than she could have explained. After a long time—for there

were elements of stubbornness and obstinacy in Susan's nature—she subdued herself, and went upon her knees in earnest. When she was there the second time, thoughts came upon her of Uncle Edward's tender blessing, of his family in heaven, and of the confidence, so calm and certain, with which the old man looked thither. The poor child scarcely knew how to pray out of her wont; but her very yearning for some compassionate ear to pour her troubles into gave her heart expression —and in the act was both comfort and hope.

CHAPTER X.

WHILE Colonel Sutherland's plans for everybody's benefit were thus being rendered useless, the Colonel himself, unaware of these untoward circumstances, waited anxiously for answers to those letters which he had written at Tillington. Morning after morning the good man sighed over a post which brought him only his *Times*, and the letters of his boys. The dining-room at Milnehill, which was breakfast-room and library, and everything to the Colonel, was as unlike as possible to that of Marchmain. One side of it was lined with bookcases, full of the collections of the Colonel's life. There were two large windows, commanding a wonderful view. A

Turkey carpet, warm and soft, a low fireplace polished and shining, a great easy-chair, drawn close to the cosy round table, with its cosy crimson drapery falling down round it, just appearing beneath the folds of the snow-white tablecloth. Here the Colonel took his place in the morning, rubbing his chilled fingers, and pleased, in his solitude and the freshness of his heart, by the look of comfort around him. Here he took his solitary breakfast, and looked over his *Times*, and wondered why there were still no answers to his letters. It was not wonderful in the case of Sir John Armitage, who might be at the other end of the world for anything that was known of him; but why there should be ten days' delay in having a letter from London, the Colonel did not know.

One morning, however, two epistles in unknown hands were brought him; he took the one which bore the London postmark. This is how it ran:—

"DEAR SIR,—Your favour of the 15th came duly to hand, though I confess that I was

startled by its contents. My connection with the Scarsdale estate is not what you imagine. I have no control over the money whatever, nor power to draw upon it until the proper period; therefore, of course, I must decline, as you will perceive it is entirely impossible for me to accede to your request. My position is sufficiently uncomfortable at present without further complications.

"You are, perhaps, aware that the trustees were chosen from among young men, for the express reason that they might be expected to survive until the time stipulated. As I have just said, I find my position sufficiently disagreeable already, and should be very sorry to embarrass it further with any unjustifiable proceedings. Your relation has the eye of a lynx, and keeps it constantly upon us. As for the young man, I cannot but think his father is quite right in keeping him ignorant. In such circumstances as his, with the least inclination towards gaiety, and knowing his own position, he would assuredly fall into the hands of the Jews. As for putting him in a profession, I am bound to say with Mr. Scarsdale, that I

consider it unnecessary; but as I am unable to render any assistance, I refrain from advice which might not be so acceptable as I could wish."

The Colonel read this over and over again, with concern and attention. After he had fully satisfied himself of its meaning, and discovered that there was not even an inference of help from one end to the other, he folded it up again, and threw it into the fire. "Better leave no chance of its ever coming into Horace's hands," he said, as he accomplished this discreet destruction. He was annoyed and vexed with a renewal of the feeling which had moved him on his interview with Mr. Scarsdale, though without the profound regret and compassion which he then experienced; but he was scarcely disappointed. He held his other letter in his hand, and entered into a little rapid mental calculation, before he broke the seal, considering how it would be possible, out of his own means, to make the necessary provision for his nephew's studies—"Unnecessary for him to have a pro-

fession? Is it necessary for the boy to be ruined body and soul?" cried the Colonel, unconsciously aloud—"because he has the luck to be descended from a diabolical old——." Here Colonel Sutherland made a pause, restrained himself, shook his head, and said, with a sigh, thinking certainly of his brother-in-law, and perhaps a little of his nephew, "Ah! there's mischief in the blood!"

His other letter was that one which poor Roger Musgrave had written amid all the echoes of his empty house. This agitated and excited the Colonel much more than the other had done. His spectacles grew dim while he was reading it—he gave utterance to various exclamations at the different points of the letter. He said, "Very true!" "Very natural!" "Poor fellow!" "Exactly as I should have felt myself!"—and showed other demonstrations of interest in his restless movements and neglect of his half-finished breakfast. The conclusion, however, threw him into evident distress; he got up and walked about the room, stopping unconsciously to take up a piece of useless paper on one of the tables and

tear it into little pieces. Anxiety and doubt became the prevailing expression of his face. Here in a moment were all his plans for Roger deranged and broken to pieces; and yet it was so natural, so characteristic, on the whole so right and honest, that he could not say a word against it. But it did not grieve him the less on that account. Roger was going to London, that was the sole clue to him; and he had no reply from Sir John Armitage—no response to his own appeal from the influential personages whom he believed himself to have influence with.

"He'll be a private soldier by this time; most likely a Guardsman," said the Colonel, and his imagination conjured up the splendid figures under the arches at the Horse Guards with a positive pang, as he thought of Roger Musgrave's ingenuous face turned, crimson and shame-faced, towards the crowd. What could the Colonel do?—nothing but fill his mind with anxious and uncomfortable reflections concerning the life and fortune, and, besides these, the manners and morals, of his young *protegé*—and wait.

The house of Milnehill stood upon the sunny brae of Inveresk, at no great distance from the square barn-church, ornamented by a pepperbox steeple, with which the taste of our grandfathers has crowned that lovely little eminence. The garden on one side was surrounded by an old wall, mossed and gray, above which you could see nothing but the towering branches of the chestnuts, which in the early summer built fair their milky pinnacles of blossom over this homely enclosure. The garden sloped under these guardian shadows open and bright towards the sea, though at the distance of at least two miles from the immediate coast—and the wall on the lower side was low enough to permit a full view from the windows of that beautiful panorama: the little town of Musselburgh, with its fishing suburb lying snug below; the quiet pier stretching its gray line of masonry into the sea; the solitary fishing-boat hovering by; the wide sweep of bay beyond, with the Bass in the distance lying like a turtle or tortoise upon the water, and all the low, far, withdrawing ranges of the hills of Fife.

The house was of two stories, homely and rural, with one pretty bright room on either side of the little hall, which was filled with Indian ornaments, as was also Colonel Sutherland's drawing-room, which the Colonel did not enter once in a month. Behind and on the upper story there was abundant room for a family—though the rooms upstairs were low, and shaded by the eaves. The house altogether was old-fashioned, and much behind its neighbours. Smooth polished stone, square-topped windows, palladian fronts, and Italian villas have strayed into Inveresk as to other quarters of the world. But Milnehill remained red-tiled and picturesque, with eaves in which the swallows built, and lattice windows which opened wide to the sweet air and sunshine, and smoke curling peacefully through the branches over the red ribs of the tiled roof. The Colonel had some family associations with the place—perhaps, in his heart, for he was no artist, the old soldier was a little ashamed of his tiles, and thought the smooth "elevation" next to him, turning its windows to the dusty road, and looking as if it had strayed out from

the town for a walk and been somehow arrested there, was a much superior looking place to his nest among the trees. But Milnehill, the Colonel was fond of saying, was very comfortable, and he liked the view; and, indeed, not to consult the Colonel, the fact was, Milnehill was the cosiest, honestest little country house within a dozen miles.

If Susan could but see that paradise of comfort and kindness!—she who knew no interior but Marchmain. When the Colonel had read his paper he put up his glasses, put on his great-coat, took his hat and his cane, and went out through his garden, pausing to see the progress of the crocuses, and to calculate in his own mind when his earliest tulip would bloom—to take his daily walk. Though his mind was engaged, he had all that freshness and minuteness of external observation which some old men keep to the end of their days: he saw, with a real sensation of pleasure, the first big bud upon his favourite chestnut begin to shake out its folded leaves; he noted the earliest tender shoot of a green sheath starting through the sheltered soil, in that sweet nook

where his lilies of the valley waited for the spring; and so opened his garden gate and went out into the sunshine of the high-road, to see the light shining upon Arthur's seat, and the smoke floating over Edinburgh, and the country between quivering over with an indescribable sentiment of renewal and life. There was not very much variety in the Colonel's walks—this day, without any particular intention, he turned his steps towards the sea.

CHAPTER XI.

THE Colonel took his leisurely way, with his hat a little on the back of his head, and his cane in his hand, along the dusty high-road towards Edinburgh. Most of the people who met him on the way knew the old soldier: he got salutations respectful and familiar on all sides; he had something to say to half at least of the people on the road; and at the doors, as he passed along in the fresh sunshine, which gladdened the air without much warming it. Through the breaks in the houses were to be seen glimpses of the broad sands, with the sea breaking upon them in its long rush and roll, ringing through the air like a cannon-shot, though there was nothing beyond a fresh breeze to impel its course. The Colonel, born

in this neighbourhood, and carrying its well-remembered sights and sounds in his heart, during all his years of exile, rejoiced in the boom of the Firth with that mixture of familiarity and novelty which makes all the special features of his native locality so delightful to a man who has been absent from it for years. He went along, stopping now and then to speak to some one, recognizing every turn on the road, and curious if he met a face which he had not seen before; happy in his fresh outward eye, his youthful heart, and the natural friendliness and universal interest which covered the sunny surface of this Christian soul. Do not think that what lay below was less profound or less sincere; but for that happy, natural temperament, that involuntary observation of external things, the Colonel would have been a bereaved, solitary, heart-broken man—would he have been better, or more worthy of the love and respect which followed him everywhere?

As he approached the little town of Portobello, the Colonel diverged from his road, and went to make inquiries of kindness for an old

friend. It was a prim suburban house, with its little plot of grass and evergreens before the door, at which he entered, on the urgent invitation of the maid, who, with perhaps less apparent deference than such a maid would have had on the other side of the border, smiled over all her fresh face her own welcome to "the Cornel," and took upon herself to assure him that "the mistress was all her lane, and had been baith the day and yesterday, and would be so thankful to see him." On this representation the Colonel entered. This, too, it was easy to gather from *a priori* evidence, was an Indian house. Indian curiosities ornamented the hall and staircase, by which the Colonel proceeded to the drawing-room, a little faded in colour but very comfortable, where an old lady, wrapped in a large old Indian shawl, of which the colours, like the colours of the room, were rather the worse of years, sat in an easy chair, with a soft footstool, and cushions for her shoulders, the bell within her reach, and a little table with her book and her work close by her side. Her hair was snow-white, but her cheeks as fresh in complexion

through their wrinkles as the cheeks of her rosy maid; and her close cap, with its soft white blond and white ribbons, came round her kind old face with a warm and homely simplicity, increasing the natural expression, which was that which we call by instinct motherly. Yet mother as she certainly must have been, she was alone, with nothing near to bear witness of family love or ties, save a half-open letter, written on impalpable pink Indian-letter paper, which lay on her little table. The old lady held out her hand to her visitor without rising from her chair. "Is that you, Edward? I am very glad to see you," she said, with a look of real pleasure. The Colonel drew a chair to the other side of the table, and sat down opposite to her. Then they asked each other about their health, and the Colonel confided his private pangs of rheumatism to the attentive ear of his ancient friend. They were old friends, "close connections," as they said themselves—old people—had lived much the same kind of life, with the difference of man and woman; knew each other's affairs and each other's friends; and

had lived for years on those terms of affectionate amity which by-and-by perhaps will be impracticable, and not to be hoped for, between a man and his deceased wife's sister. Such was the relationship between Colonel Sutherland and Mrs. Melrose: they had all the confidence of brother and sister in each other, with perhaps even a touch of more animated kindness, because their friendship had a little of choice in it, as well as of nature.

"You look *fashed*," said the old lady. "I can see there's some trouble going on behind your smile. What's the matter? Nothing wrong, I hope, with the boys?"

"No, thank heaven!" said the Colonel; "if I had not meddled with other boys, who are less within my control. I have two vexatious letters this morning—one from that trustee I told you I had written to about my nephew: he will not do anything for him."

"I thought as much," said Mrs. Melrose, with a little nod of her head. "Take my advice another time, Edward: never you put any dependence on these business men; what do they care for a young man's heart or spirit,

when it's interest and compound interest that's in the question? I saw a great deal of them when I was young. My uncle that we were sent home to was a merchant, you remember: we used to spend our holidays there. I was very near marrying in that way myself, if I had had my own will at seventeen. They're very good fathers and husbands, and the like of that; but put a question of what's good for a man, and what's good for his money, before them, and they aye put the last first. Yes, yes, I had very little hopes from that; but you, you see, you're one of the sanguine kind—you are a man that never will learn."

"So it appears," said the Colonel; "and now, as though that were not enough, here's that hot-headed young Musgrave I told you of—he about whom I wrote to old Armitage, of the Fifty-ninth, and to Sir George—a famous young fellow!—a boy you'd make a pet of, as sure as life; here's a letter from *him*, informing me that he can't impose upon my goodness, and all that sort of thing, and that he's off to London. I have no doubt in my own mind," said the Colonel, solemnly,

"that at this moment the lad's on horseback under the arch at the Horse-Guards, with a crowd staring at him. You may laugh, but it's a very melancholy reflection; a man of birth and manners; the last of an old family; it is extremely vexatious to me."

"And why should the folk stare at him?—is he such a paladin?" asked the old lady, with her merry laugh.

"He is a handsome fellow," said the Colonel, "and carries himself like a gentleman—which is more than can be said of everybody," he added, with a vexed recollection of Horace; "however, these are all *my* affairs. Is that a letter from Charlie? I certainly begin to forget the time for the mail."

"You'll find it out by-and-bye, when Ned is gone," said Mrs. Melrose; "but look you here, Uncle Edward—here's a sight for you—do ye think that's like Charlie's hand?"

The Colonel made haste to get his spectacles from his pocket, and put them on with a little nervousness.

"Eh?—what?—it's a lady's hand," he cried, peering at the pink epistle, which the

old lady held out to him triumphantly at arms length. "Who is it? Eh? What's this? Fanny—no—Annie Melrose? Who on earth is Annie Melrose? Do you mean to tell me the boy's married before he has been out a year?"

"Indeed, and I am very sorry to say it is quite true," said the old lady, shaking her head with a demure and proper regret, which was quite belied by the bright expression in her eyes; "and really the two young fools, they seem so happy, that I have not the heart to blame him; for, after all, he's my only one, Edward, and I know who *she* is —she's Charlie's Colonel's daughter—you may recollect her; but I doubt if she was out before you came home. It's a very short acquaintance, to be sure, but she was at school here, and used to come and spend the day with me. Her mother and I were great friends at Bintra when my poor General was in command there. The father was just a subaltern then, and no so very discreet either; and she was fighting among her young family, poor thing! I took a

notion in my head that she was like one of my friends at home, and grew very fond of her. That time when Charlie was ill, when he was five years old, just before we sent him home, when I wanted poor Mary to go to the hills with me, and she could not—you remember?—I took Mrs. Oswald and her youngest, who was very delicate just then. To be sure, it was only a baby, poor bit thing, but the two bairns had but one ayah between them, and lived for a month or two like brother and sister. They were too young to remember anything about it; but I always think there's a providence in these things. And so the short and the long of it is, Charlie's married, and here's a penitent letter from him, and a loving one from *her*; and if you believe me, when I got them first, what with Charlie's pretence to be very sorry for doing the rash act, as the newspapers say, out of my knowledge, when it was just as clear as possible the boy was out of his wits with happiness; and what with her pretty bit kindly letter, poor thing! I laughed with pleasure till I cried, and cried

till I laughed again. And you may look as grave as you like, Uncle Edward—it was what you did yourself, my man, and what your son will do after you; and you'll no persuade me to make myself wretched because my only son is happy, and has made himself a home."

Here some tears rolled quietly into the corners of the old lady's eyes, and were wiped off with a small, withered, lively hand.

"For you know, Edward," she added, softly, "though I am not the person to say much about that kind of thing, or to deny that there's quite as many bad women as bad men, still, you know, Edward, it wants one of us really to make a home."

"Ay, Elizabeth, I know," said the Colonel, with a suppressed and quiet sigh. Then there was a momentary pause; but these two old people had both come through life and its battles; both knew losses severe enough to be beyond talking of; and over both beneficent age, consciously approaching the invisible borders of another world, had spread his patience and calm. The stream

of talk was renewed again with a very little interval.

"But I want to know," said Mrs. Melrose, "what you are going to do about your nephew—is he coming here?"

"I proposed he should; I don't know—very likely he may prefer London; indeed, it is rather difficult to decide for Horace; he has a great opinion of his own judgment," said the Colonel. "However, things are less complicated now; there is only himself to think of, since it appears whatever is to be done for him I must do."

"Mind the boys in the first place, who have the best right, Edward," said the prudent old lady; "and mind, too, that I have a penny in the corner of my purse if you should be put to that; and then about your niece—is there any word of her coming to Milnehill?"

"I fear it," said the Colonel, shaking his head; "but, by-the-bye, that reminds me—if I could persuade her father to let Susan come, will *you* come to Milnehill, Elizabeth, and take charge of my little girl?"

"For why?" said Mrs. Melrose; "do you think you are not a safe enough guardian for your niece at your age?—or that the young creature wants an old wife to be spying over her for propriety's sake? Nonsense!—and beside, Edward, if all's true the papers say, I'll want somebody to take care of me, a delicate young person that I am, when I go to your house. You do not suppose I would have gone to see you if I had thought you any less than a brother all this time? But look at the fellow's impudence, venturing to say, in the very Parliament itself, that the like of us are no relations, and might court and marry like strangers. I would just like to have a woman's Parliament for once in a way, to settle *them*, the filthy fellows!—if they got out of it with a hair upon their heads I can tell you it would be no fault of mine."

"You were always a politician, Elizabeth," said the Colonel, rising with a smile.

"Very true. I had to read up all the news by every mail to let my poor General know what he would be interested in," said the old lady; "little wonder if I came to like

it myself; and speaking of that, Edward, go you your ways home and send me the *Times*. You would have brought it with you if you had been a thoughtful man."

"Wait a wee," said the Colonel, in his kindly Scotch. "I had very near forgot it with your news; here it is, safe in my pocket all this time—and never deliver your judgment, Elizabeth, after this, till you're sure the pannel is duly convicted. Here it is!"

So saying, the Colonel put down the paper, and took his leave of his sister-in-law. As he went downstairs her elder servant, who seemed to be on the watch, came out of the kitchen, followed by the pretty maid, to arrest the Colonel, and ask if he knew Mr. Charlie was married. "And the mistress is as pleased!" said that respectable functionary, "and pretends to be angry, and laughs wi' her heart grit — and him only three-and-twenty, and her eighteen! Cornel! did ye ever hear the like a' your days?"

"Oh, yes, I've heard the like," said Colonel Sutherland, smiling; "and as it was sure to

happen some time, Janet, do you not think it's as well soon as syne?"

"Weel, Cornel, that's true," said Janet, going out with grave perplexity to open the little garden gate for him. Janet was more shocked in her propriety than her mistress, and did not find it nearly so easy to reconcile herself to the strange event.

Then the Colonel proceeded homeward in the same leisurely fashion. The day had overcast, the breeze had freshened, the sea rushed with a louder fling upon the sand, and made a sharper report at the height of each successive wave. Rain was coming on, and Colonel Sutherland quickened his footsteps. When he had reached as far as the wayside village of Joppa (Joppie in the vernacular), it was necessary to take shelter till the shower was over. While he stood waiting, with his deaf ear attentive to the entreaty of the good woman at whose porch he stood, to come in and rest, a post-chaise went rapidly past. Glancing out from it, with the momentary glance of a wayfarer, appeared a face which the Colonel recognized without being able to

tell who it was; a yellow face, querulous but kindly—a fastidious, inquisitive pair of eyes. Beside the driver on the box was a man with a cockade on his hat, with whose face, too, the Colonel found himself strangely familiar. Who could it be? He watched the vehicle till it was out of sight, persuading himself that it had taken the road to Inveresk, and followed it as soon as the rain was over, without knowing who his visitors might be, but in the fullest expectation of finding somebody arrived before him at Milnehill.

CHAPTER XII.

"SOMEBODY has arrived!—who is it?" asked the Colonel of his factotum, who opened to him the garden-door—that door in the wall which admitted you suddenly into all the verdure of the garden of Milnehill.

"Cornel, you're a warlock!" exclaimed the man, with amazement. "This very moment, sir, two carpet-bags and a portmanteau. I reckon they're meaning to stay."

"They—who are they?—is there more than one?" asked the Colonel; "make haste! do you see you keep me in the wet, blocking up the door?"

"The rain's off," said Patchey, dogmatically; "I'm meaning to say there's wan gentleman, and his man, of course—his man.

That's maybe no interesting to you, Cornel—but it is to me."

"You provoking old rascal!—who is it?" said the Colonel.

Patchey scratched his head. "If you'll believe me, Cornel, I cannot think upon the name. It's no Arnot—no, that's not it; nor Titchfield neither. I ken him as weel as I ken mysel', Cornel—dash me if ever I thought of asking him his name! Arnold—na—tuts! he was in the Queen's service, this gentleman, up Burmah ways, when there was warm work gaun on; but, bless me, what whimsy's ta'en the Cornel by the head noo?"

This last exclamation followed the Colonel's abrupt disappearance along the garden-path, leaving Patchey amazed and wonderstricken, with his hand upon the door. Colonel Sutherland had heard enough to inspire him with a new hope in respect to his visitor. To be sure, he recognized him!—to be sure, it could be no other person! He made haste into his cozy dining-room, casting a hurried glance as he passed at the carpet-bags and portmanteau, which still encumbered the hall. The

dining-room was in confusion, much unlike its usual state; great-coats, and cravats, and wrappings of every kind lay scattered on the chairs; while in his own easy chair by the fire the stranger sat pouring out his tea, and with all the materials for a comfortable breakfast round him. Certainly he had lost no time.

"Armitage!—it is you, then?" cried the Colonel, hastening up to him with the heartiest welcome.

"Ah! yes, it is me—how d'ye do, Sutherland?—delighted to see you again. Here I am in full possession, like an old campaigner," said the stranger, somewhat languidly; "puts one in mind of Kitmudgharee, eh?—the happiest time of my life!"

"And yet I am very glad to hear you have advanced in fortune and the world since then," said Colonel Sutherland, drawing a chair to the other side of the table; "and how is your health? They tell me you have become an invalid of late days—how is that? you used to be the most vigorous of us all. India?—liver affected?—how is it?"

"Humph!" said Sir John, shaking his head;

"can't tell—come to my fortune—some people say that's it. Nothing to do but please a man's self is what I call hard lines, Sutherland; and duties of property, and all that. Never had any bad health till I got rich. Here's a nice kind of existence for a man come to my time of life—not married and not intending to marry. Here's a set of men that hunt half the year and shoot the other half—ought to keep friends with 'em—only society in the country, except my Lord Duke, and he's stuck-up. Then, when I'm at home, there's a confounded lawyer with his new leases and his raised rents, and 'Sir John,' 'Sir John,' till I'm sick of my own name. Then there's a fellow of a chaplain pegs into me about an heir. What the deuce do I want with an heir? Says the estates go into another family after me—swears it's a sin to let the name of Armitage die out of the country. What's the consequence?—I can't look a woman in the face without thinking she wants to marry me, or I want to marry her, or something; and the end of the whole concern was, Sutherland, that I ran away—bolted, that's

the fact, and got your letter in Paris, where I was bored to death. Thought I couldn't do better than come to you express—and, by George! I haven't enjoyed my breakfast like this for ten years!"

"Very well—here you shall do as you like, and hear not a word of leases or heirs," said Colonel Sutherland, laughing. "We'll have it all our own way at Milnehill—ladies never come here."

"Ah! very sorry," said the new comer, glancing up vaguely, as if to see how far it was safe to go in reference to the past; then returning to his breakfast, proceeded with the perfect inconsequence of a man—not selfish, but occupied with himself, and saying whatever came uppermost. "Very odd thing—the very day I got your letter something came into my head: There's old Sutherland, thought I, got a couple of nice daughters—honest girls—mother a very pretty woman—no doubt they take after her. Then came your letter: 'pon my life, it brought the tears to my eyes!"

This downright stroke the Colonel bore with sufficient fortitude. He held his breath

for a moment, and said nothing—then hastened to interest himself in the progress of the stranger's breakfast, which was going on in the most satisfactory manner. Never guest did more honour to hospitality. He repeated that he could fancy himself once more in the Kitmudgharee station, but for the blazing fire, and the Frith haddocks, which were perfection; and repeated over again, with emphasis, "The happiest time of my life!"

"Before then I was a young fellow of ambition," said Sir John, "waiting to get on in society, and all that sort of rubbish. If this confounded fortune had come then, there would have been some comfort in it. Never felt myself a man till I went to India—always kept trying to find out what this one and the other thought of me. Got clear of all that rubbish among your bungalows. Ah! these were the days! But I say, Sutherland, guess how I came here?"

"In a postchaise; I saw you, but could not remember for my life who you were," said the Colonel.

"Eh? Ah! couldn't remember me?—

humph!" said Sir John, with momentary mortification; "odd that—I should, have known you anywhere. Postchaise from the boat—detestable boat!—rocks like a tub, and smells like an oilshop—came down from London by sea. And, now that I think of it, do you know, I'm mighty sorry about poor Musgrave; a fox-hunter, you know—nothing but a fox-hunter; but a very good fellow—gave me a helping hand myself, when I was young and stood in need of one—what have you made of the poor boy?"

"I am sorry to say he has made something of himself which I don't like," said the Colonel. "Poor fellow! he was too high-spirited, and impatient, and proud, to wait for our influence, and what we should do for him: he's gone off to London, I fear, to enlist. He's a famous young fellow—I grudge the lad putting on a private soldier's uniform even for a day."

"I don't—best thing he could do," said Sir John. "If the service was as it ought to be, that fellow would rise like a shell. If I had sons I'd put them in the ranks, every one, and push 'em, sir—for an example, if

nothing else—sons, ah!" Here Sir John shrugged his shoulders slightly, shrank back into his chair, and, in dismal contemplation of that distressing subject, made an end of his breakfast. "However," he said, after a pause of thought, devoted to his own engrossing affairs, "I'll give in to the popular opinion of course here, as I always do. We'll look the fellow up, Sutherland: he shall have his commission; I've got no claims upon me, at present, at least. Musgrave's boy shall not go to the bad if I can help it. I suppose, after all, it's not likely to help a young man's morals to throw him loose on London, out of his own class into a barrack room, eh?—where he don't care a straw for the public opinion, and where the fellows get drunk, eh? Where do you suppose now he'll go?"

"He's six foot one, if he's an inch," said the Colonel, meditatively; "of course into the Guards."

"Guards!—ah! lots of fellows there that have seen better days," said Sir John—"wild fellows, that break their mothers' hearts, and bring gray hairs to the grave, and so on.

Regent's Park—nursery-maids—wont do that; he's fit to marry any girl he might take a fancy to, sir, and make it impossible for any man to help him—for a fellow who marries beneath him," said Sir John, falling into the favourite channel of his own thoughts, "is lost—you can do no more for him. To be sure! I never thought of that, odd enough, till this moment; raise a *man* from the ranks, all very well—but I defy you to raise his wife; that must be looked to directly, Sutherland—*don't* you know where he is?"

In answer to this question, the Colonel placed before his old comrade Roger's letter. Colonel Sutherland was not at all afraid of the nursery-maids or of young Musgrave's foolish falling in love. The Colonel, who had loved and been married at the natural season, wore no false spectacles to throw this hue upon everything, as did the unhappy old bachelor, hunted to death by his problematical heir, and able to think of nothing else. Certainly lads of twenty are not to be guaranteed against such accidents; but Roger, the Colonel felt very certain, was by no means possessed

by that hyperbolical fiend who directed the thoughts of the unfortunate baronet to "nothing but ladies." Sir John read the letter with a little emotion, which he was evidently ashamed of; he held it in his hand for some little time after he had finished reading it, in order that he might be able to look perfectly unsympathetic and unconcerned. Then he put it down and got up hastily.

"With your permission, Sutherland, I'll have an hour's rest," he said. "I tumbled in here—what with the cold and feeling desperately hungry; nothing like sea-sickness for giving a man an appetite afterwards—without ever asking for my apartment. Thank you for your hospitality, old fellow—you see I mean to take advantage of it—and we'll talk this all over after dinner. I say, what a famous snug place you've got! There's another grievance of that said Armitage Hall, which the fellows there would have you believe a paradise. Not a room in the house that does not want half a dozen people about to make it look inhabited; not a chance for a snug chat like what we've just had. Suppose

a mite of a fellow like me crouching by a fire that could roast me, shut in by a screen in a room that would hold half the county!—ugh! the thought is enough. Here we are!—famous! —there's a fire!—I'll bet you sixpence my man lighted that fire. He has a genius for that sort of thing. I'll tell him to communicate his secret to your people here."

"I suspect," said the Colonel, with a smile, but a momentary pique, "the fabric was built by the maid; but I hope you'll find the place comfortable. Take care you don't injure your night's rest by resting through the day—dinner at six—nobody but ourselves. You will find me downstairs whenever you please, but don't think you're in the least degree called upon to make your appearance before dinner."

Then the Colonel went downstairs and stepped into a little side-room, in which he sometimes indulged himself with a modest cigar, while the dining-room was being cleared of all the litter brought by his visitor. Colonel Sutherland was an orderly man by nature; he did not like to see the coats and rugs and

mufflers lying about on his chairs, and smiled to himself with a little perplexity over that guest, who was so singularly unlike himself. He was not quite certain as yet how they should "get on," though very confident in Sir John's good meaning and his own good temper. Presently Patchey came to consult him about the dinner, and to state that the cook would gladly have an audience of her master, which, with a little reluctance, the Colonel accorded. An arrival so sudden, and of so important a person, was no small event at Milnehill.

CHAPTER XIII.

For this first day, it must be allowed, the Colonel did not particularly enjoy the stranger in his house. The establishment of Milnehill consisted of two maids and Patchey, who had been Colonel Sutherland's factotum and personal manager for twenty years. Patchey's name was Paget as it happened, and he was supposed to have noble blood in his veins, as he boasted on certain extreme occasions; but it was only on very grand festivals, and as a name of state, that his noble patronymic was produced, and for the most part he was well content with Patchey, which consisted better with his fortunes. Patchey was Irish by birth, though Scotch to extremity in everything else; but that accident perhaps helped him

to rather more blunders than might have been expected from his discreet years and sober mind. At the present moment Patchey was considerably elated by the arrival of his old acquaintance, Sir John's man, who required more entertainment than his master, and made demands upon Patchey's time as host which somewhat interfered with his duties. This travelled gentleman made no less an impression upon the maids, who were also considerably distracted from their proper and necessary occupations, in spite of the anxiety of Betsy, the cook, to produce a creditable dinner in honour of Sir John. These combined causes made great infringement upon the Colonel's quiet comfort during the day. His biscuit and little bottle of Edinburgh ale did not make their appearance till nearly an hour after the proper time. He had to ring three times for something he wanted; and Patchey himself, the soberest of men, shared, by way of encouraging his *confrère*, in so many little bottles of the said Edinburgh, that he appeared at last in a confused condition of wisdom, which excited to the utmost the wrath of the Colonel. The ex-

plosion of unwonted indignation which came upon Patchey's astonished head sobered him effectually, and the house recovered its equilibrium, especially when Sir John's man was summoned to his master, and the maids awoke to an uncomprehending dread of "the Cornel in a passion," which frightful picture Patchey presented to them in colours sufficiently terrible. Afterwards things went on smoothly enough. An unexceptionable dinner made its appearance, with such a curry as would have won the heart and warmed the palate of any old Indian; and Patchey, if he looked a little wiser and more solemn than usual, was all the more rigid in the proprieties, and behaved himself with a dignity worthy of the grand butler at Armitage Park. Sir John, who had not been seen since breakfast, appeared wonderfully refreshed and rejuvenated at the dinner-table. The leading fancy which inspired him at the present moment, though it frightened him, and though he feigned to fly from it, had nevertheless its influence upon his toilette, as well as on more important things. He was about fifty, middle-sized, yellow-com-

plexioned, but, save for a little querulousness of expression, by no means like an invalid. Neither did the shade of Parisian fashion in his dress increase his pretensions to ill health, though it added a certain odd, indefinable something of the ridiculous to his appearance, which Colonel Sutherland could not make out, yet could not help observing. Of this, however, nobody could be more profoundly unaware than Sir John, though no one would have been quicker to perceive the same thing in another. He took his seat at the cosy round table with a sigh of satisfaction, and looked round upon all the comforts of the room; the fire sparkling and manageable and not too large, the crimson curtains drawn, the bright lamp, the well-spread table, and Patchey's solemn face at the sideboard. "Happy man!—*you* have not been thrust into a gloomy desert of an Armitage Park, and congratulated on your good fortune—*you* can make yourself as cosy as you will!" said Sir John, who for the moment commiserated himself most sincerely, and thought with a positive shudder of those ghostly rooms from which he had fled, to such

cold comfort as could be found in a Parisian *appartement*, shining with white marble and white muslin, stucco and gold.

"I suppose you could make yourself snug, too, if you preferred it, eh?" said the Colonel, across the table. "I don't think *I* should have quarrelled with Armitage Park, for the sake of my Ned and Tom."

And as he said these words he put his hand to his ear, and bent across the table for his companion's answer; for the Colonel was not without a spice of mischief in his nature, and rather enjoyed the silent hitch of the unfortunate baronet's shoulder, the pucker on his brow, and the "pshaw!" of disgust which burst from his lips. However, the dinner mollified Sir John—that Indo-British dinner, with its one yellow-complexioned dish, and its general tone, slight but *prononcée*, of oriental fervor. Had not Betsy been cook to General Mulligatawny, and lived three years with Mrs. Melrose? Paris was nothing to her—Sir John proclaimed his enthusiastic approbation aloud.

When the important meal was over, and the

two gentlemen sat by the fire over their wine, they had a long dinner-talk about Scott of the 27th and Wood of the 40th—and that fine fellow Simeon, who was forming the troop of Irregulars, you know—and poor Peter, who lost his majority by that ugly accident, and only recovered to see his juniors passed before him—and Hodgson, who came home on sick leave—and Roberts, who had got cadetships for all his five sons. When that highly interesting and satisfactory talk flagged with the removal of the cloth, and the departure of the servants, Colonel Sutherland began to grow a little anxious about his *protegé*. Poor Roger, though Sir John might be very willing to befriend him, evidently occupied a very small place in the baronet's memory. The Colonel cracked some nuts very slowly, and fell into silence. His visitor lost in the depths of that easy chair—the Colonel's own chair—which the selfish little man, in the most entire disregard of prescriptive rights, had unfeelingly appropriated, looked round him with perfect comfort and satisfaction. In the momentary silence, the crackle of the fire, the

deliberate crack, crack of Colonel Sutherland's nutcrackers, the faint sound of the breeze outside, combined to heighten the tranquillity, ease, and uninterrupted comfort of the scene. "By George!" cried Sir John, suddenly starting up with an action so impetuous that he almost upset his wine, and caused the Colonel to stop short in his occupation, holding out his nutcracker in one hand, putting the other to his ear, and looking with a startled glance over the top of his spectacles.

"This time last night I was tossing on your detestable German ocean, wishing you and your house far enough, and as sick as—as—as an unfortunate traveller could be. I think this a very agreeable contrast. Though you do throw your boys in my teeth, old fellow, here's prosperity and happiness to Milnehill!"

"And a very hearty welcome to my old comrade," said the Colonel, stretching out his kind hand.

Settling down after this little effusion, cost the English temper of the guest a few minutes silence. Then he resumed upon the business of the night:—

"Now, Sutherland, about this boy. I think that was a very proper letter of his, do you know; I like him the better for having written it: I should have done the same thing in his place. The young fellow of course has done something to bring us into mud and bother by this time; of course he has—what's the good of making a bolt if nothing comes of it? I incline with you to think he's gone into the Guards."

"By-the-bye," said the Colonel, "I've been thinking that over. I'm not so sure of that by this time: a man who hopes to rise from the ranks would find *that*, I fear, about the most unkindly soil he could try. Musgrave, of course, wants to see service—the Guards very rarely leave London. After all, I incline to change my opinion: a marching regiment would be better for him with his views."

"What a fellow you are!" cried the baronet, "you bring a man round to your views, and then cast him off and declare a contrary opinion. Now I'm all for the Guards and the Regent's Park barracks. He's a handsome fellow enough, I suppose, and I know he's not

very clever. Of course, he's taken in by the superior corps, and high reputation, and all that sort of thing. I'll bet you something he's a Guardsman. Now, what's to be done? If you want me to start for town directly and hunt him up, I say thank you, my excellent friend, I am exceedingly comfortable here; travelling bad for my health—beginning of March the worst season in the year—and so on, to any extent you please. But I don't want the boy to slip through our fingers, mind you. What's to be done? Don't you think he'll write again?"

"Very doubtful," said Colonel Sutherland.

"Doubtful?—doubtful's something," said Sir John. "It can do no harm, so far as I can perceive, to wait and see. Let's be quiet for a little, and keep on the look-out. Of course, had I known what had happened I might have stayed in town," he added, with a slightly injured air, "and settled that concern before I came on here. But, of course, as I did not know—"

"I did not know either; nobody knew—he only left home the day before yesterday," interrupted the Colonel.

"To be sure; and yet it would have been very convenient could I have been informed of it while in town," proceeded the baronet, still in a tone of injury; "really at this time of the year—and I don t see there can be any damage done by waiting to see if he writes again."

"Only that he might enter a regiment going to India, or Canada, or Australia, and might write on the eve of the voyage, as is most likely, and be lost beyond remedy," said the Colonel, anxiously.

Sir John scratched his head. "That would be a bore," he admitted; "at all events, let's wait—we'll say a week; a recruit can't be off to the end of the world in that time. Then there's a little leisure to think; and I say, Sutherland, keep your interest for your own occasions, old fellow—you may want it yet for one of those everlasting boys of yours. I've a strong confidence Tom will take you in, and go for a soldier like the rest of his race. What would you make the boy a parson for? A Scotch parson too!—whom nobody can be of the least benefit to. Wait a little—he'll change

his mind, that fellow will, or he's not the boy I took him for. Let's join the—hum—I forgot—no ladies to join," he muttered, in as low a tone as he could drop his voice to so suddenly. "Play chess still, Sutherland?—let's try a game."

CHAPTER XIV.

Sir John Armitage found Milnehill an exceedingly agreeable habitation. He fell into the routine of the Colonel's habits as a man long accustomed to a life and duties similar to those of his host only could have done. Day by day he recovered of his querulousness and invalidism. He even forgot the dreaded heir who had driven him from his new inheritance, and began to be able to speak on ordinary subjects without much allusion to the dreadful subject of marriage, and his own perplexities in respect to it. Then Sir John, when once delivered from himself, was a little of a humorist, and enjoyed the peculiarities of the society in which he found himself. Numberless old Indian officers, members of the

Civil service, families who, without being of that origin, had two or three sons in our oriental empire, and people more or less connected with India, were to be found in the neighbourhood. Indeed, with the mixture of a clergyman or two, a resident landed proprietor, linked to the community by means of a son in the B.N.I., or a daughter married in Calcutta, and one or two stray lawyers from Edinburgh—this formed the whole of Colonel Sutherland's society, and no small part of the general society of the neighbourhood.

These excellent people, to the greater part of whom the world consisted of India and Edinburgh, whose associations were all connected either with the kindly and limited circle of home, or with the *bizarre* and extraordinary life of the East, and to whom the rest of the world came in by the way, a sort of unconsidered blank of distance between the two points of interest, were as original and agreeable a community as one could wish to meet with; experienced, for years of travel, of intercourse with primitive people, and of universal command and authority, had given a certain decision and

authority to their judgment; yet so singularly simple in respect to this European world and its centres of civilisation, and so innocent of all public sentiment other than the dominant Anglo-Saxon instinct of sway and rule over an inferior race, that their views on general subjects had a freshness and novelty which, if sometimes a little amusing, was always racy and original. Knowing very little, except in words, of the races who contest with us the supremacy of the modern world; of those powers so equally balanced whose slightest move on either side sets all the kingdoms of Christendom astir, and threatens contests bigger and more ominous than any conquering campaign of the East; this community was good-humouredly contemptuous of the incomprehensible ignorance of those dwellers at home who knew no difference between Tamul and Hindostani, who innocently imagined that a man at Agra, being in the same country with his brother at Madras, might have a chance of meeting with him some day, or who could not be made to comprehend the difference between a Dhobi and a

man of high caste. These strange ignorances they laughed at among themselves with a pleasant feeling of superiority, and contested Indian appointments and the new regulations of the Company with far greater interest than the state of Europe could excite them into. One and another had charge of a little troop of children, "sent home" for their education. Somebody was always returning, somebody always "going out." There was great talk, especially among the ladies, of outfits and their comparative cheapness, and of the respective advantages and disadvantages in travelling overland or by the Cape. Sir John, who was Indian enough to find himself much at home in this society, was at the same time man of the world enough to be amused by its characteristics. He found it more entertaining to listen to a lady's troubles in a journey to the hills, to the adventures of the dâkh, or the misbehaviour of the Syces, than he had found it in recent days to bewail the afflictions of a continental tour, the impositions of the inns, and the failure of the cooks. Palanquins and howdahs were

unquestionably more picturesque than traveling carriages and *vetturini*, and the Dakh Bungalow ten times more original than the *Hôtel d'Angleterre* or the *Römische Kaiser*. Sir John, for the moment, found himself so famously entertained, that he showed no inclination whatever to abridge his stay at Milnehill.

He liked his host, he liked the society, he liked the quarters; the dinners were good, the curry superlative, the house extremely cosy. Then the freedom of the bachelor life, free from any disagreeable claim of duties, suited the baronet exactly. His room was exactly the size he preferred, his fire always burned cheerfully, the Colonel left him to himself with perfect good breeding and discreet kindness, forcing his inclinations in nothing. General Mulligatawny, whose "policy" touched one side of the humble enclosure of Milnehill, had two unmarried ladies at present resident in his house, in whom the baronet felt a certain interest, both bound for India, and consequently not to be seen or treated with after a certain date, which greatly increased their

attractions. One of them, the General's grand-daughter, a pretty girl of eighteen, to whom Sir John seriously, but secretly, inclined, and who, he rather more than suspected, was pretty certain to laugh in his face at any avowal of his incipient sentiment; the other, a handsome woman of thirty, youngest of all the said General's dozen children, "going out" to keep house for a brother, who had already got through two wives, and preferred a little interregnum before looking for another. This latter lady, Sir John felt with a little terror, was what people call "extremely suitable," and the very person for him. Consequently, he conceived a great dread of her, mingled with a little anxiety to look well in her presence. With these attractions to the neighbourhood, is it wonderful that Sir John showed little inclination to leave Milnehill?

The week passed, and another week followed it. There was still no news from Roger Musgrave, and the Colonel grew at once impatient and anxious. These feelings, struggling with his punctilious and old-fashioned hospitality, made

him exceedingly uncomfortable. He could no longer enjoy the presence of his guest, while at the same time it was against all his traditions of friendliness to suggest anything to him which should shorten his stay, or make him feel himself unwelcome. The Colonel, to whom all the varied sentiments of life had come in their due season, could not see the baronet's perplexities and pre-occupations in presence of womankind without secret amusement and wonder; and Sir John's regards, divided between Miss Mulligatawny and her niece, surprised his host into occasional accesses of private laughter; but this by no means sufficed to divert the Colonel, as it diverted his visitor, from the important object which had originally brought him here. Colonel Sutherland never entered his cosy dining-room in the morning without the dread of finding a letter from Roger, telling of some step which was irrevocable, and carried him quite out of their reach. He went to rest with that thought in the evening, and took it up on waking the next day: he began to be quite

restless and full of discomfort; he even meditated setting out by himself to London to find the young man: he wrote to various old friends in town, begging them to make inquiries. Then he repeated to himself, "Make inquiries! look for a needle in a bundle of hay!" Yet, nevertheless, sent off his letters. On the whole, nothing had so agitated and disturbed the Colonel for years. He pictured to himself the lingering hope of being yet sought after and aided, which would dwell in the youth's mind unawares: he imagined the hope sickening, the expectation failing: he thought of the bitter enlightenment, which has ceased to believe in words and promises, growing round the boy: he felt his own word losing its meaning, and his own earnest desire frustrated. Then, unable to keep silence, in spite of his reticence as host, he spoke to Sir John on the subject. Sir John made light of his troubles: "My dear fellow, what can they do with a batch of new recruits in a week—three weeks, is it? Very well, then, three weeks; what do you suppose could be done in that time? Besides, have you any certainty that

troops are being sent abroad at all? I don't know of any; and for the Queen's service, you know, I ought to be almost a better authority than yourself. No, no, have patience —we'll hear from the boy presently, I have not the slightest doubt of it. Give him up? —no, not a bit! but a little knocking about will do him good—always does young men good! If you look so very serious, I shall believe you want to get rid of me."

This last address was unanswerable. The Colonel closed his lips with a sigh. As for his own influence, from which he at one time hoped a good deal, he found it conclude in a courteous letter and a ready promise. The Colonel was extremely discomfited and discouraged; for the first time in his life he repented of kindness. Had he, after all, "raised expectations which could never be realized?" The matter gave him a great deal more pain than Sir John could have thought possible. *He*, with all the carelessness of a man who has commonly found the world go well with him, put this affair aside lightly. Why should anything happen to disconcert their plans?

As soon as the boy should turn up he was ready and eager to help him. He had no apprehension of any romantic *contretemps*, such as the Colonel feared; such things only occurred in very rare cases. What harm could it do to wait?

Thus still another week passed on. A month after hearing from Roger, Colonel Sutherland found another letter on his breakfast table; it was dated "Ship 'Prince Regent,' in the Downs, March 21st." With a gasp of excitement the Colonel ran his eyes over it, and then thrust it into the hand of Sir John, who was calmly eating his breakfast. The baronet started, read it over, jumped from his seat, and called for his man in a voice of thunder. Then he flew to a writing-table which stood in one corner, wrote something hurriedly in gigantic characters, shouting aloud at the end of every word for "Summers! Summers!" Summers made his appearance hastily, amazed and fluttered by the imperative demand.

"Fly!—horseback, railway, anything that's quickest—telegraph-office, Edinburgh! To be sent this instant; return directly; here's your

money; I tell you, fly!" cried the excited baronet.

Summers made an astonished bow, looked at the paper, and demanded where? His master took him by the shoulders and thrust him out of the door, following him through the rain along the garden, and shouting, "Telegraph-office, Edinburgh!" in his ear, with sundry stimulating expletives. Then Sir John returned much more slowly. He found the Colonel marching about the room, very grave, and very much excited.

"It's not your fault, old fellow," said the baronet, hastily "bolting," to use his own expression, the remainder of his breakfast; "here's the man that's to blame; come down upon *me*, it'll do you good. I don't give this up yet. How's the wind? Dead south-west for a miracle—can't go a step down the Channel in a sou'-wester! Come along—put up your traps, brighten your grave face, and let's be off by the first train!"

"We'll be too late!" said the Colonel, whose mortification and distress were great.

"Not a bit of it," said Sir John. "Tele-

graph reaches the ship in half-an-hour — 'Young man, Roger Musgrave, enlisted among the troops on board the "Prince Regent," to be detained. To the officer in command.' We shall be there by noon to-morrow all right. Why do you suppose now that Fortune should make up her mind to spite us? Why shouldn't the wind stay for twenty-four hours in that quarter, and all be well?"

"Why, indeed?" said the Colonel, with a sigh; "why should not everything serve our caprice when we lose the true opportunity, and then make a fictitious one?—but they don't, Armitage. I shall never forgive myself; however, while there is still a hope let us go."

For the Colonel's fears had been literally fulfilled. Roger had enlisted in a regiment about to sail for the Cape, where there was at present raging one of the many Caffre wars. He wrote to take leave of his friend, believing well to be out of reach before any late succour could reach him. A certain shade of proud and forlorn melancholy was in his farewell. The young man felt to his heart a pang which he would not confess—he had been taken at his word.

CHAPTER XV.

By the same evening train—for they were too late for any other—which had carried the Colonel not very long before to that little rural world which included Tillington and Marchmain, Horace Scarsdale and Roger Musgrave, the two gentlemen that night rushed to London. As they went their darksome way in the dimly-lighted carriage, which, as it chanced, they occupied alone, each leaned back into a corner, occupied with his own thoughts. Sir John, totally refusing to accept the uncomfortable chance of being too late, looked out at every station with an anxious eye upon the wind, and cried, "Hurrah for the sou'-wester!" as they dashed into London in the cheery spring morning which brightened the grimy

face of even that overgrown enchantress. Colonel Sutherland said nothing; his interest in the wind was very limited; he had made up his mind to misfortune, and blamed himself deeply. The old man understood, as by a revelation, the mind of the youth who had addressed to him that letter. The feeling of secret disappointment, without anything to complain of, the forlorn success of his experiment, the perfect acquiescence which everybody seemed to have given to his self-disposal; while, at the same time, it was quite true that he had put himself out of everybody's way, and "that nobody was to blame," as people say, all shone through his melancholy leave-taking. If they did succeed in finding him, would he return? the Colonel asked himself. If they came to the rescue at last, after he had made his plunge, and had borne the bitterest part of it, would he consent to be bought off, and owe his improved rank to Sir John's tardy benevolence? The message itself—was that judicious?—might not its only effect be to leave a certain stigma upon the character of the young soldier? Thus one subject

of reflection only more painful than another had quick succession in the Colonel's thoughts. He vowed to himself he should never again wait for the co-operation of another in anything which was necessary to be done; and so only shook his head as Sir John hurra'd for the "sou'-wester," and, looking behind him as he descended from the carriage, shook his head still more, and felt the cold whisper of another wind rising upon his cheek. Sir John perceived it also, and grew pale. "It is only a current—there are always currents of wind under these archways," he explained, hurriedly. Then they drove across London in a cab to the Dover railway, snatched a hasty breakfast of boiling coffee and cold beef, for which they had not above ten minutes time, and so rushed on again to make sure of poor Roger's fate. Even Roger's uncertain fate, however, and all his self-reproach on this occasion, could not hinder the Colonel's eyes to brighten as they whirled past almost in sight of Addiscombe, and saw some distant figures in the Cadet's uniform on a distant road. Could one of them perhaps be Ned?

—and the Colonel thought of seeing his boy to-morrow with a cheerful warmth at his heart, which, in spite of himself, made him more hopeful — thinking of Ned he could still believe to find the wind unchanged, the ship unsailed, the young man's mind unembittered. As the miles and the moments passed, as the green country sloped upward into grassy hills, and showed here and there its little precipice of chalk, the Colonel's courage rose. Not from any reason; he was a man to be above reasons sometimes, this tender old soldier; the comfort and the courage came, an inexplicable genial breath from the neighbourhood of his boy.

While, in the meantime, a result perfectly contrary was produced on Sir John: he shuffled about in his seat with an incontrollable impatience; he gazed out of the window; he closed his eyes with disgust when he turned from that; he could have got out and pushed behind like the Frenchman, so eager was his anxiety. The express train was too slow for him—the wind had changed!

The wind had changed! When they came

in sight of the sea these stormy straits were specked with ships liberated from their prison, with white wings spread, and impatient feet, making their way out to the ocean. Cold and shrill, with its whistle of ungracious breath, the gale hissed with them through the narrow tunnels; pennons fluttering to the west—bowsprits pointed seaward, clouds flying on the same cold track, and as much as these an increase of cold, an acrid contradiction of the sunshine, bewrayed the east wind which drove invalids to their chambers, but carried ships down channel. Often before had Sir John Armitage anathematized the east wind—perhaps he never cursed it in his heart till now, as he watched with envious impatience a large vessel covered with sail making her way out of the Downs. "That's her for a wager!" said Sir John to himself; "the very thing they'd send troops in—a round, shapeless, horrid old hulk, warranted the worst sailer on the station. To be sure!—there she goes, bobbing like an apple in a posset—ugh, you ugly old beast!—couldn't you have waited another day?"

"Eh?—you were speaking—what's the matter, Armitage?" said the Colonel, roused by the sound.

"Nothing," said Sir John. To tell the truth, he did not feel himself quite the hero of the position at this moment; he did not care to disclose his fears until hope was proved vain; perhaps, after all, that was not the "Prince Regent"—perhaps the officers were still not aboard, or some happy accident had prevented her from taking the earliest advantage of the change of wind. The baronet dragged his companion along with him to the "Ship" before he would suffer him to ask any questions. There the obsequious attendants who received the strangers were startled by the impatient outcry and gesture, almost wild, of the excited baronet. "The 'Prince Regent,' lying in the Downs, with troops on board for the Cape—who can tell me if she has sailed?" This inquiry was somewhat startling to the innkeeper and his vassals. "We can send and see," suggested timidly one of the waiters, "directly, sir." Sir John rushed out again, and started off almost at a run towards the

pier. "Sailed two hours ago," said a "seafaring" individual, of questionable looks, who stood on the steps of the hotel smoking his cigar. "Hallo there! sailed two hours ago, I tell you—d'ye think you can make up to her, hey? I'd back you against the precious old tub if you're in that mind—but she's got the start, look you, by two hours—all sail and a fresh wind!"

Sir John came back much discomfited and crestfallen. He could not make up his mind to the disappointment. It was quite intolerable to him. He consulted everybody round as to the chances of overtaking the ship—was he likely to do so if he hired a steamer? The nautical bystander took up this idea with great zeal; but before Sir John committed himself a better informed waiter volunteered the information that there were still some officers to join the vessel at Portsmouth, and that she might be overtaken there. The Colonel shook his head. To him the chances of success seemed so small, that the further journey was scarcely worth the while, and some hours would still elapse before there was a train. Sir John

however, still sanguine, found out with a telescope the vessel, which he still held to be the "Prince Regent," exhausted himself in contemptuous criticisms on her build and sailing qualities, and declared that they were certain to be at Portsmouth hours before the unwieldy transport. The Colonel said nothing; he paced about the room with serious looks and a grieved heart, sometimes pausing to look wistfully out from the windows; a week earlier and Roger might have been saved—a day earlier and they could still have seen him, have tried the last chance for his deliverance, and made him aware of their real intentions and regard for his welfare. The Colonel could not forgive himself. For perhaps the first time in his life he judged his companion unfairly, felt disgusted at Sir John's exclamation of self-encouragement, and secretly blamed as levity his eager special pleadings and arguments with himself. Presently they started again for Portsmouth, fatigue and vexation together proving almost too much for Colonel Sutherland, who was the elder by several years, and the most seriously affected in the present in-

stance. As for Sir John, he still kept himself up by expectations: of course, they must reach Portsmouth in time—of course, there could be no difficulties in the way of buying Roger off—he would return with them, get his commission, and then follow his pseudo-comrades, if he had still a hankering after the smell of powder. He was thus flattering himself, when they reached the busy seaport. Sir John, for once forgetful alike of dinner, rest, and toilette, with yesterday's beard, and no better provision for the fatigues of the day than a couple of biscuits, rushed at once into the hubbub of the port. Some time was occupied in these inquiries; he ran from place to place, the Colonel marching gravely by his side, putting his hand to his anxious ear when any one addressed them, listening with his solicitous stoop forward to every word of every answer. But it was again in vain — the "Prince Regent" had only signaled in passing, and had neither paused nor taken in any officers at Portsmouth: by this time, heavy transport as she was, the vessel was at sea.

Heavily and in silence the two travellers

sought an hotel, marched up the stairs side by side, without saying a word to each other, and threw themselves, with a simultaneous groan of fatigue and disappointment, into chairs. This last performance elicited a short, hard laugh from the baronet, now thoroughly out of sorts. "I've been a confounded fool!" cried Sir John—"I'll never forgive myself. Why the deuce don't you come down upon me, Sutherland?—I'm an ass—I'm an idiot—I deserve to be turned out of decent society! Hang me, if I did not mean to be a father to that boy!"

The real sincerity and penitence of his tone woke once more all the kindly feelings of the Colonel. "It cannot be helped now," he said with a sigh; "by this time it's providence: and I don't doubt it'll turn out for the best."

"Ah, it is easy for you to speak," said Sir John, who perhaps did not quite understand his companion's simple, practical reference to a disposition beyond the power of man; "you are not to blame: to think, with my confounded trifling, I should have let Musgrave's boy throw himself away!"

This led the Colonel to soothe his friend, and take the guilt upon himself, a proceeding which the baronet, after a few minutes, did not object to. After a while his spirits rose. He began to be reminded of a vigorous appetite, and to recover the exhaustion of fatigue. With a little assumption of languor on his own part, and a tender regard for the necessities of the Colonel, Sir John took upon himself at last to order dinner. Then the travellers separated, to make their most needful ablutions. When they met again at dinner Sir John was himself again.

"After all, Sutherland," he said, "nothing can be more absurd than to disturb ourselves about this, though it is very vexatious. 'Twill do the boy good, after all—nothing I should have liked better at his age; and won't harm his prospects a bit—everybody likes adventurous young men. Here's a health and a famous voyage to the young fellow. I'll take care there's a welcome waiting for him when he lands—for of course every ship that sails the passage will outstrip the transport. To be sure, he's melancholy enough now, I believe.

Do him good—teach him to be careful how he runs away from his friends another time. What's the good of breaking our hearts over it?—he'd be just as sea-sick if he were Colonel; and I warrant the 'Prince Regent' gives him quite enough to think of for eight days. What can't be cured, you know—here's good luck to him!—the end of his voyage will make up for it all."

The Colonel drank his luckless *protegé's* health very gravely: he thought of him all night, travelling with the forlorn lad over the darksome sea; and sent better things than wishes after him—remembering his name, in every break of his sleep through that long night, before God, who saw the boy; and so, unseen, unaided, and ignorant of the disappointed efforts which had toiled after him, and of the one tender heart which ached over its failure, and was his bedesman, nothing else being possible, the young adventurer went away deeper into the world and his life, further into the night and the distance, and the black paths of the sea.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE two gentlemen returned next day to Dover, to make inquiries after the fate of Sir John's telegraphic despatch, which, it appeared, had been delivered without doing any good. Roger had enlisted in a regiment of rifles: he was a famous shot, young, strong, and active—by no means such a recruit as a commanding officer concerned for the credit of his regiment would relinquish readily; and, so far as the travellers could ascertain, no notice had been taken of their communication. Then they went back to London, where Sir John, feeling himself considerably discomfited, hurried to the Horse Guards, to see what could be done at last for his unfortunate *protegé*. Having ascertained, with difficulty,

the regiment in which Roger had enlisted, he discovered, with no difficulty at all, that this regiment was quite complete in its number, and that at present there were no vacancies among the officers. At present! The chances were that a few months of a Caffre war might show some difference in those full lists; but a man could not purchase a prospective commission on this grim possibility. The only thing Sir John could do in the circumstances he did. There was no lack of kindness at the bottom of his heart: he wrote a kind letter to Roger, enclosing a bank-bill for a considerable amount, confessing his mortification at the consequences of his own delay, and ordering the young man, with an imperative cordiality which he felt quite justified in using, and which Roger was not likely to resist, to use the money and come home directly—at least, whether he came home or not, he was not to serve the campaign in the ranks. "If he comes home, he's not the boy I took him for," said Sir John; but he dispatched his letter, and with it a note to the major who led the detachment, and with whom he had some

slight acquaintance. Having done this, the baronet's conscience was clear: he did what he could to persuade Colonel Sutherland to remain for some time in town; he himself, after what had happened, having no particular inclination to return to Milnehill. When he found the Colonel was not to be persuaded, Sir John remained by himself, finding refuge, alike from Armitage Park and the grave looks of his friend, in the London season. He had been long out of the gay world. After a week or two in town, he gradually warmed to its fascinations, and forgot all about his failure very speedily, in a modest amount of fashionable dissipation and the comforts of his club.

The Colonel stayed only to spend a day with Ned, and hastened home; and as everything there went fair and softly, and nothing else within the limits of this history requires immediate attention, let us spare a moment to glance after poor Roger, forlorn and alone among his comrades upon the monotonous sea.

Among his comrades, and yet alone—more alone than the young man had been

during all his life. He had never supposed —he had no means of imagining—the humiliations of this new life. He could gulp the inferior rank, the mortifications of his humble position—he could manage to salute as superiors, totally above him and out of his sphere, the young officers who a year ago would have been too happy to accompany him into the preserves of the Grange, or sit by his side at his godfather's hospitable table. These things he could bear; what Roger could not bear was the perpetual society from which he could not free himself—the constant presence of his "mates," and entire lack of anything like privacy in this existence, of which he had not conceived half the pangs. If he had been able to seek the meanest possible retirement of his own, he could have borne all other grievances cheerfully—but this was impossible; and the life of which every hour sleeping or waking was spent in the rude companionship of men of a class much inferior and a breeding totally different from his own, grew bitter to the young man. He became unnaturally grave and self-

absorbed. He attended to the minutest details of his duty with the most scrupulous and rigid care: but the sunshine and the glow of youth died away from him—life spread around him full of vulgar circumstances, unceasing noise, unceasing mirth, a perpetual accompaniment which made his heart sick. He did everything he could to recall his courage—he tried to flatter his imagination with pictures of future distinction; but Roger had not the imagination of a poet; his fancy was not strong enough to carry him out of the midst of the reality which vexed his soul; the pictures grew languid, the hopes feeble. His whole nature retreated within itself, and had to summon its uttermost forces to bear the trial. An experience which he had never looked for deepened his thoughts, and gave a painful development to his mind. His nearest approach to solitude was when he leaned over the side of the ship, and lost the talk of his comrades in the sweep of the waves. Then many a melancholy fancy possessed poor Roger: sometimes he could fancy he saw the face of his god-

father gazing at him with a melancholy compunction; and the loyal heart rose, and his own looks did their best to brighten, as if even the departed spirit should not blame itself while he had power to say No. Sometimes it was the good Colonel who looked out of Roger's imagination, with a kind and grieved reproach, "Why did you not wait a little?—could you not trust *me?*"

Sometimes for an instant the face he had seen upon that moorland road beside Marchmain—the young face troubled and blushing, which knew and recognized him, in spite of itself, flashed for a moment before Roger's dreaming eyes; and then he turned away from the water and the heavens with a quick sigh, and turned back to the little world which made its passage over that sea—the noisy world between those wooden bulwarks, lounging here and there, playing cards, sleeping in the sun, jesting, quarrelling, talking unprofitable talk, and laughing loud laughter. This was *his* world, where Roger had to live.

At the same time an incident occurred to trouble him. A detachment of a regiment

of infantry shared the comforts of the same transport; and one day, shortly after they sailed, Roger was startled to meet Sam Gilsland, who for his part came to an amazed stand before him, and sheepishly put up his hand to his forehead in respectful salutation. Nothing could persuade Sam that "th' young Squire" was, like himself, in the ranks. A hurried conversation ensued, in which Roger made strenuous endeavours to knock the fact into the thick head of his countryman; and Sam went away with a confused idea that he was not to touch his cap any more to this unexpected shipmate, or to address the rifleman as Mr. Roger, or to speak of him as the young Squire. This incident at once grieved Roger and comforted him. Somehow there was a certain consolation in the idea that one individual, at least, in that little community knew what and who he really was. But the annoyance overbalanced the comfort. Sam after this could not come in contact with his former patron but with a ludicrous and embarrassing consciousness, which would have made Roger laugh if it had not pained him; the simple lout felt him-

self alarmingly on his good behaviour whenever he suspected Roger's neighbourhood, and made a hundred furtive errands and clumsy attempts to do something for him, which at once disturbed his mind and touched his heart. He was by no means a bad fellow, this Sam—a certain gleam of chivalrous sentiment warmed his opaque spirit at sight of the sad equality with himself to which, in appearance, never in reality, the young Squire was reduced. The honest clown felt a certain mortification and downfall in his own person to think that Roger in his crowded cabin was cleaning his own accoutrements like "a common man!" Sam made stealthy private expeditions into the rifleman's quarters to do it for him, moved by an indescribable mixture of compassion and respect, and those tender home-associations which never had been so warm in the simple fellow's heart as now, and could not comprehend the burst of mortified gratification—the mixture of pain and pleasure, wrath and gratitude, with which Roger sent him away. After that he had to content himself with touching his cap stealthily when

he could have a chance unseen, to the young Squire, and confiding, when he had the opportunity, his own private troubles to him, not without a secret conviction that Mr. Roger, by-and-bye, if not immediately, would be able to right and avenge his humble follower. Sometimes Roger was disposed to think Sam's presence an augmentation of his own downfall, but in reality there was a certain solace in it unawares.

All this time, however, a third person, totally unsuspected by the unfortunate youth, observed him narrowly and closely, losing nothing, not even the clownish services which Sam would fain have rendered to the young rifleman. The Major was one of the most unsentimental of men. Abstract benevolence would never have suggested to him any special interest whatever in a recruit of superior rank. "His own fault, of course—best thing the fellow could do," would have been the only comment likely to fall from the lips of the Major; and no indulgence had any chance to drop from his hands upon the head of the unhappy volunteer who had been "wild," or

"gay," or "unsteady," and who had lost himself in the ranks.

But from the day of their embarkation the face of Roger had caught his eye. A puzzling consciousness of knowing these ingenuous features troubled him; he felt certain that he had seen them, and seen them under very different circumstances, somewhere. Then came the telegraphic message of Sir John Armitage, which, abrupt and unauthorized as it was, made the Major wroth. He tore it through and sent the fragments overboard in the first flush of his indignation. After a while, however, he repented of his wrath. He had scarcely noted the name in his hurried glance upon the paper—he forgot it in the flush of passion with which he tossed the presumptuous missive overboard; but as soon as he came to himself an uneasy idea that it concerned the young man whom he began to note, troubled the Major. The thought riveted his attention more and more upon the melancholy and grave young rifleman, who seemed to spend all his leisure time leaning over the bulwark watching the waves sweep by the vessel's side. Gradually, and

unawares to himself, the Major grew more and more interested in this solitary soldier; his interest grew into a pursuit; he could no longer help observing him, and so strongly had the idea entered his mind, that to find it mistaken would have been a personal mortification and disparagement of his own wisdom. Then the Major, in his quick, quarter-deck promenade, was witness to the amazed recognition of Sam Gilsland, and of various other private encounters between the two young men, in which Sam's furtive salutation of respect spoke more than words to the sharp eye of the old soldier. How to act upon his suspicions was, however, a more difficult matter than how to pursue them; and if he was right, what then? Sons of gentlemen before now had dropped clandestinely into the green-coats of the Rifle Brigade, about whom the Major had given himself no manner of trouble; and he scarcely liked to acknowledge to himself how much that unregarded message lay on his conscience, or how glad he would have been now to have paid a little more attention to it.

However, the time slipped on, and the

voyage progressed, while the commanding officer busied himself with these fancies, finding himself strangely unable to dissociate the melancholy young private soldier in his green coat from a certain radiant young huntsman "in pink," whom his fancy perpetually conjured up before him as the hero of some north-country field, but whom he could not identify by name. The Major even tried the unjustifiable expedient of discovering Roger in some neglect of duty, that he might have a plausible motive for calling him into his judicial presence. But not the most sudden and unlooked-for appearance of his commanding officer could betray the young rifleman into forgetfulness of the necessary salute, and in every other particular his duty was done rigidly and minutely, beyond the chance of censure. This circumstance itself piqued the Major's curiosity further. Then his interest was aided by the interest of others. Somebody discovered the "superior education" (poor fellow! he himself, in sincere humility, was ready to protest he had none) of the young man, and suggested his employment

apart in those regimental matters which required clerking. Strange occupation for the old Squire's Nimrod! Recognizing that he was not what he seemed, the first impulse of assistance thrust the young huntsman—the child of moor, and fell, and open country—into a little office, and put a pen into the fingers which were much better acquainted with gun and bridle. This odd conclusion of modern philosophy contented the projectors of it mightily, and by no means discontented Roger, who, sick at the heart of his humiliated life, was glad of anything which separated him from his comrades, and gave him at least his own society, if not that of anybody higher; though he knew very well, if no one else did, that his *rôle* of rifleman was much more natural and congenial to him than the *rôle* of clerk, of which he knew nothing whatever.

The fact, however, which everybody knows perfectly well, yet few people acknowledge, that all the nameless somethings which distinguish between the lower and the higher—and build most real and palpable, though indescribable, barriers between class and class, do by

no means necessarily include education, was not a fact taken into account by the good-natured subaltern who interested himself in Roger's behalf, while the Major only watched him. So the young man, whose penmanship was not perfection, sat by himself over the regimental business, puzzling his honest brains with accounts which were sometimes overmuch for his arithmetic, yet encouraged by the consciousness that even this irksome business, totally unsuitable for him as it was, was a step of progress. And the Major now and then appearing across his orbit, tempted him with wily questions, to which Roger was impenetrable; and Sam Gilsland, with a grin of satisfaction, tugged his forelock and whispered his conviction that Master Roger would ne'er stand in the ranks when they came to land—which conclusion, however, and the hopes of his subaltern patron to get permanent employment for him of this same description when they reached the end of the journey, were anything but satisfactory to Roger. It began to be rather hard for the young man to keep on the proper respectful

terms with this honest subaltern, whom yet he did not choose to confide in. "No!" exclaimed Roger, "I am fit for a soldier, not for a clerk;" and a flush of his old sanguine conviction, that on the field and in actual warfare there must still be paths to distinction, swept across his face and spirit for the moment. The next minute he was once more puzzling over his papers, with his head bent low and his frame thrilling, his emotion and enthusiasm all suppressed; though they would have made a wonderful impression on the young officer who patronized and took care of him, and who was convinced that Musgrave was not a common fellow, and had a story if he would tell it. This, however, was the very last thing in the world which Roger, totally hopeless now of any deliverance, and too proud to accept the pity of men who were no more than his equals, had any mind to do.

Their arrival at the Cape, however, made a wonderful difference in the prospects of the young rifleman. Sir John Armitage's letter, put into his hands before they landed (for the baronet was correct in his supposition

that the "Prince Regent" was of course the slowest sailer on the seas), threw him into a sudden agitation of pride, gratitude, shame, consolation, and perplexity, which it is impossible to describe; in the midst of which paroxysm of mingled emotions he was summoned to the presence of the Major. The Major received him with outstretched hand. "Thought I knew you all along," said that unagitated functionary; "could not for the life of me recollect where—made up my mind it was a peculiar case—eh?—Sit down and let me hear at once what you mean to do."

"What I mean to do?" asked Roger, in amazement.

"To be sure—you've had your letters, I suppose? This here is a delusion," said the Major, tapping upon the coarse sleeve of the young man's uniform; "found it out, haven't you?—knew it myself all along; meant to interfere when we came to land, whether or no, and inquire about your friends. Here's old Armitage spared me the trouble; recollect as well as possible the meet with the Tillington hounds—your uncle's, eh?—and the old boy

was extravagant, and left you unprovided for? Never mind! a young fellow of pluck like you can always make his way. Now, here is the question—Are you going home? What are you going to do?"

These questions were easy to ask, but impossible to answer. Roger had scarcely read with comprehension Sir John's letter, and his mind was in the utmost agitation, divided between his old ideas of entire independence and the uneasy consciousness, of all that his experience had taught him. He scarcely knew how he excused himself from immediate answer, and managed to conclude his audience with the Major. The rest of the day he spent in the most troubled and unsatisfactory deliberations; but a little later, delayed by some accident, a letter from Colonel Sutherland came into his hands. That letter persuaded and soothed the young man like an actual presence; he yielded to its fatherly representations. That voice of honour, simple and absolute, which could not advise any man against his honour—Roger could scarcely explain to himself how it was that his agitation

calmed, his heart healed, his hopes rose with all the rebound and elastic force of youth; he no longer felt it necessary to reject the kindness offered him, or to thrust off from himself, as bitter bonds, those kindly ties of obligation to which it was impossible to attach any mean or sordid condition. Why should he be too proud to be aided? But he had no mind to go home and lose that chance of distinction and good service which would be his best thanks to his friends. A few days after, Roger Musgrave had rejoined his regiment as a volunteer, money in his purse, a light heart in his breast, and everybody's favour and goodwill attending him. He who was the best shot within twenty miles of Tillington was not far behind at Cape Town; and there we leave him for his first enterprise of arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

In the meantime the life of Horace Scarsdale had made progress, according to his own plan, in his new sphere. His uncle, at first annoyed and disturbed by the summary settlement which the young man had made for himself, was perhaps, after all, rather pleased than otherwise to be thus freed from the charge of arranging for one whom he understood so little; and no opposition of friends hindered his establishment in the office of Mr. Pouncet, where the lawyer, half out of admiration for the abilities which speedily developed themselves in his new clerk, and half in tender regard for the suit which he possibly might have to conduct for him, was very gracious to Horace. Everything promised well for the

new comer: his prodigious knowledge of the private affairs of everybody in the county, their weaknesses and follies—knowledge acquired, as we have said, from the outdoor servants and humble country tradesmen in the village alehouses, but of which Horace was skilful enough to veil the origin—amazed his employer, who found these gleanings of unexpected knowledge wonderfully useful to him, and could not comprehend how they had been gained. The young man had now an income, small in reality, but to him competent and satisfactory, and sweetened by the consciousness of freedom and of knowing it was all his own. He was eminently cold-blooded, and "superior to impulse"—a man who could calculate everything, and settle his manner of life with an uncompromising firmness; but he was not a stoic. He stepped into all the dissipations of the little country town—stepped, but did not plunge—with an unlovely force, which *could* command itself, and did not. He was not "led away," either by society, or youthful spirits, or by that empire of the senses which sometimes overcomes very

young men. What he did which was wrong he did with full will and purpose, gratifying his senses without obeying them. He carried his cool head and steady nerves through all the scenes of excitement and debauchery of which Kenlisle was capable—and it had its hidden centre of shame and vice, like every other town—sometimes as an observer, often as a partaker; but he was never "carried away"—never forgot himself—never, by any chance, either in pleasure, or frolic, or vice more piquant than either, ceased to hold himself, Horace Scarsdale, closer and dearer than either sin or pleasure. He was the kind of man to be vicious in contradistinction to being a victim or a slave of vice. He was the man to pass triumphantly through hundreds more innocent than himself, strong in the unspeakable superiority of being able to stop when he found it necessary, and of having at all times that self-control and self-dominion which belongs to cold blood and a thoroughly selfish spirit. Secure in this potent ascendancy of self-regard, Horace could do many things which would have destroyed the reputation of

a less cool or more impressionable man. Yet his entry into independent life, and those pleasures hitherto unknown to him—mean and miserable as were the dissipations of the little country town—occupied Horace, though not to the exclusion of his own interests, enough to make him slower than he had intended to be, in his searches after his father's secret. True, there was no case of Scarsdale *versus* Scarsdale, or *versus* any other person, in any of the law reports he could reach, any more than there was in Mr. Pouncet's brain; and he knew no means at the present moment of entering on his inquiry, and had obtained no clue whatever as to the manner of this secret, or which was the way of finding it out. But he did not chafe under this, as in other circumstances he might have done: for the present he was sufficiently occupied, and not at all discontented with his life.

At the same time, in spite of the deportment which displeased the Colonel, there were some traces of breeding, unconsciously to himself, in the speech and manner of Horace,

which gained him acceptance among the people around him. He was not refined nor cultivated, nor accustomed to society; but though his sentiments might be vulgar enough, he himself was not so. His very rudeness was not the rudeness of a Kenlisle townsman; he was ignorant of that extraordinary junction of rural vanity and urban importance, which goes towards the making of the fashionable class of such a place. His father, whom Horace would not have imitated consciously on any account whatever, and who certainly bestowed no pains on his instruction, had notwithstanding known in his day a society and breeding much superior to anything in the little north-country town, and the atmosphere lingered still about Mr. Scarsdale, an imperceptible influence which had affected his son unawares. Then his very position, outcast from society as he had been brought up, gave him a certain superiority over the limited people to whom a local "circle" was the world, and an introduction to some certain house the highest point of ambition. Horace laughed aloud among his new

associates at the idea of society in Kenlisle, and smiled to the same import with a silent contempt which was extremely superior and imposing in Mrs. Pouncet's drawing-room, to which he was speedily admitted, in right of his mysterious "prospects."

By dint of this contempt for the community in general, which everybody of course understood to bear exception for themselves, and of the singular and mysterious circumstances of his family, which began to be remembered and talked of; by his own arrogant philosophy, which imposed upon the inexperienced youths about him, and the subtle talents to which his employer bore witness, he grew rapidly into an object of interest and curiosity in the little town. No one could tell what sudden eminence he might spring into, upon some sudden discovery; nobody knew anything of him— no one was admitted to his confidence; he was the inscrutable personage of the place, and left the fullest ground for fancy, which, in the form of gossip, occupied itself mightily about the singular young man. All this involuntary homage was incense

to Horace; he sneered at it, yet it pleased him. He was elated to find himself a person of importance, though he despised the community which honoured him; and between the honours of the little Kenlisle society, the pleasures deep down below the surface, which gave a black side to the humanity of even that secluded place, and the new sense of freedom, solitude, and self-government in this new life—the whole put together effaced from his mind for the time all that eagerness for his father's secret which had preyed upon him when his life was idle and unoccupied, and when he sat by that father's table every day. He had no responsibilities, no "ties," and no heart to feel the want of affection. He abandoned himself, so far as he could abandon that self which was the only thing he never forgot, to all his new enjoyments. He was still young, absolute, and highflying, though his youth was neither innocent nor lovely; he forgot his deeply-laid projects for the moment, and stood still on his way, contenting himself with an importance, a mysterious superiority, a license of pleasure unknown to him before.

He was not an experienced schemer, bent upon the success of his plans, and deaf to the voices of the charmers. He was young, and, according to his fashion, he stood still and forgot his object in the pastimes of his youth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This state of things went on for a longer time than Horace himself was aware of. He had no correspondence with Marchmain, nor indeed with any one. For though he wrote once to Colonel Sutherland, he had no present motive sufficient to keep up a correspondence with his uncle; and nearly a year had passed over his head before he recollected this unrecorded passage of time. At the end of this period, however, business brought a visitor to Kenlisle, and to Mr. Pouncet's office, who was destined to have a most serious part in Horace Scarsdale's future life.

This was Mr. Julius Stenhouse, the principal solicitor of an important county town in Yorkshire—a man who had been bred in

Mr. Pouncet's office, had suddenly, to everybody's amazement, become his partner, and who, as suddenly, a few years after had left Kenlisle for his present residence. These events had all happened before Horace had any cognizance of the news of the district, and were consequently unknown to him until Mr. Stenhouse appeared. The stranger was a man of about fifty, with what people called an "extremely open manner," and a frank wide smile, which betrayed two rows of the soundest teeth in the world, and gave a favourable impression to most people who had the honour of making Mr. Stenhouse's acquaintance. This prepossession, however, as might be ascertained on inquiry, was not apt to last—everybody liked, at first sight, the candid lawyer; but he had few friends. Unlike the usual wont of a country town, nobody appeared anxious to claim the recognition of the new arrival. Far from being overwhelmed with hospitality, Mr. Pouncet had so much difficulty in making up a tolerable number of people to meet him at the one little dinner-party given in his honour,

that Horace Scarsdale, for the first time, though he had long assisted at Mrs. Pouncet's "evenings," had the distinguished honour of an invitation.

Before this time, however, various circumstances had concurred to attract the attention of Horace towards Mr. Stenhouse. The extreme difference between his manners and his reputation, the mixture of repugnance and respect with which Mr. Pouncet treated him, the great reluctance which he showed to enter upon any private business with his visitor, and the mystery of the former partnership which had existed between them, roused the young man's curiosity. Altogether, these new circumstances brought Horace to himself; he remembered that he was still only in an inferior position, with no avenue open as yet to fortune or importance. Running over everything in his mind, he perceived that he stood farther than ever from his father's secret, and that no other means of advancing himself had as yet appeared; and with a certain instinctive and sympathetic attraction, his thoughts turned to Mr. Stenhouse. He bestowed his

best attention upon him on every opportunity—he sought all the information he could procure about him, and about the connection subsisting between him and Mr. Pouncet. It appeared they were joint-proprietors of some coal-mines in the neighbourhood. What might a couple of attorneys have to do with coal-pits? Horace scented a mystery afar off, with an instinctive gratification. Did the mystery lie here?—and what was its importance, could it be found out?

Without knowing anything whatever on the subject, except the sole fact that Pouncet and Stenhouse were partners in this valuable piece of property, Horace set out very early one spring morning to inspect the ground, and see if anything could be discovered on the subject. It was, as it happened, the morning of the day on which he was to dine at Mr. Pouncet's. Horace had been late, very late, the previous night. This early walk was of two uses—it restored his unsusceptible nerves to the iron condition which was natural to them, and it gave him a chance of finding out in his old fashion anything that there might

be to find out. Horace neither knew the extent nor the value of the land possessed by Messrs. Pouncet and Stenhouse: he knew they drew very considerable revenues from it, but did not know how they had acquired it, nor from whom. He pushed briskly along the long country road, winding downwards to a lower level than that of Kenlisle, where once more the hawthorn hedges were greening, and the primrose-tufts unfolding at their feet.

The country looked cheerful and fresh in the early morning, with its few clumps of early trees here and there, in the tender glory of their buds, diversifying the deeper green of the fields. The smoke rose from the cottages, and the labouring men came trudging out from their doors, greeting one another as they passed with remarks upon the weather. By-and-by he came in sight of the village, with its irregular line of thatched and red-tiled houses, with the one blue-slated roof rising over them, which marked the place where an enterprising publican had swung his "Red Lion," in well-justified dependence upon the "pitmen's drouth." Beyond, several tall

shafts here and there scattered over the country gave note of the presence of the pits and their necessary machinery. Horace slackened his pace, and went sauntering through the village, keeping a wary eye around him. He had not gone very far when he perceived an old man limping out of a miserable little house near the end of the village, with a poor little cripple of a boy limping after him, in the direction of the coal-fields. Their lamps and the implements they carried pointed out clearly enough their occupation; and a certain dissatisfied, discontented look in the old man's face made him a likely subject for Horace, who quickened his steps immediately to overtake the wayfarers. It required no great exercise of speed. The querulous, complaining jog with which the old man and his shadow went unsteadily across the sunshine, told its own tale—the very miner's lamp, swinging from his finger by its iron ring, swung disconsolately, and with a grumble and crack, complaining audibly of the labour, which, to say the truth, was sufficiently unsuitable for the two who trudged along

together, the crippled childhood and tottering age, to whose weakness belonged a milder fate. The old man's face was contracted and small with age—the nose and chin drawn together, the cheeks still ruddy from a life of health, puckered up with wrinkles, and the very skull apparently diminished in size from the efforts of time. On he went, with his feeble limbs and stooping shoulders, the "Davy" suspended from his bony old fingers, and a complaint in every footstep, with his shadow all bent and crumpled up, an extraordinary spectrum moving before him along the sunny road. Horace, who gave him the usual rural salutation of "A fine morning," received only a half-articulate groan in reply. The old pitman was not thinking of the fine morning, the sweet air, or the sunshine; but only of his own troubles and weaknesses, and himself.

"To them as has the strength it's fine and fine enow," he mumbled at last; "but an ould man as should be in his commforable bed—eugh-eugh! Needcessity's sore upon the ould and frail."

"How is it that you have to get to work so early?—you're not a new hand," said Horace, with the rough and plain-spoken curiosity which often does instead of sympathy.

"A new hand!" groaned his querulous interlocutor; "an I was as I hev been, my young spark, I'd gie you a lesson would larn you better than to speak light to an ould man. I've bin about the pit, dash her, since ever the first day she was begoud, and mought have broke my neck like the rest if it hadn't a bin for good loock, and God A'mighty—eyeh, eyeh! I was about the very ground, I was, when the first word was giv there was coal there; but I'll never believe there was ought let on o' that to the ould Squire."

"Eh!—the pits here are not old pits then, aren't they?" said Horace; "who was it found the coal? I daresay the landlord made it worth his while."

"The Lord make me quat of a parcel o' vain lads, that ken no more nor as many coodies!" cried the old man; "haven't I as good as told you my belief?—and will ye pre-

tend ye ken better than me, that was born on his very land?".

"That's a bad cough of yours," said Horace, who had good practice in the means of extending information; "what do you say to a dram this sharp morning, to warm you before you go underground?"

"Eyeh, eyeh, lad, we're owre near the border," said the old pitman, shaking his head; "if ever there was a deevil incarnate on this earth it's the whiskey, and makes nought but wickedness and misery, as I can see; but to them as knows how to guide themselves," he added, slowly, "it's a comfort now and again, specially of a morning, when a man has the asthmatics, and finds the cowld on his stomach. If you're sure you're able to afford it, sir, I've no objection, but I would not advise a brisk lad like you, d'ye hear, to partake yoursel.' Ye haven't the discretion to stop at the right time at your years, nor no needcessity, as I see. Robbie, I'm a-gooin' on a bit with the gentleman—see you play none on the road, nor put off your time, and say I'm coming. Eugh, eugh! as if it wasn't a shame and a disgrace

to them as has the blame, to see the likes of me upon the road!"

"At your time of life they ought to take better care of you," said Horace; "see, here's a seat for you, and you shall have your dram. Why don't your sons look to it, eh, and keep you at home? It doesn't take very much, I daresay, to keep the pot boiling; why don't you tell them their duty, or speak to the parson? You are surely old enough to rest at your age!"

"Eugh, eugh! I haven't got no sons," said the old man, with a cough which ran into a chorus of half-sobs, half-chokes. "The last on 'em was lost i' the pit, two year come Michaelmas, and left little to his ould father but that bit of a cripple lad, poor child, that will never make his own salt. It's the masters, dash them! as I complain on. There they bees, making their money out on it, as grand as lords; and the like of huz as does it a' left to break our ould bones, and waste our ould breath for a bit of bread, after serving of them for a matter of twenty year. Eyeh, eyeh, lad, it's them, dash them! If it had been the ould

Squire, or ony o' the country gentlemen, an ould servant mought hev a chance. No that I'm saying muckle for them, more nor the rest o' the world—awl men is for their own interest in them days; but as for mercy or bowels, ay, or justice nouther, it's ill looking for the like of them things in a couple o' 'torneys, that are born and bred for cheating and spoliation. I never had no houps of them mysel'—they'll sooner tak' the bit o' bread out atween an ould body's teeth, than support the agit and the orphant—ay, though it was their own wark and profit, dash them! that took the bread from Robbie and me."

"Ah!" said Horace, "that's hard; so the pits here don't belong to the Armitage property, nor any of the great landlords? But what have a couple of attorneys to do with them—they manage the property for somebody, I suppose?"

"My respects to you, sir," said the old pitman, smacking his thin lips over the fiery spirit, which he swallowed undiluted; "and here's wishing us awl more health and better days; but I wouldn't advise you, a young lad,

to have ony on't. There's guid ale here, very guid ale, far better for a young man of a morning. You may weel ask what has the like o' them to do concerning sich things; and there's few can tell like me, though I say it as shouldn't. I was a likely man mysel' in them days—a cotter on the ould Squire's land, and serving at Tinwood Farm, and had my own kailyard, and awl things commforable. It's like, if you knaw this country, you've heard speak of the ould Squire?"

"To be sure — old Musgrave, of the Grange," cried Horace, with a certain malice and spite, of which he himself was scarcely aware; for Roger Musgrave's honest simplicity, which he scorned, yet felt galled and disconcerted by, had often humiliated and enraged the son of the recluse, who could take no equality with the young relative of the fox-hunting Squire. He listened more eagerly as this name came in—not with a benevolent interest, certainly; but the mystery grew more and more promising as it touched upon the history of a ruined man.

"About twenty year ago, I would say, as

near as moight be, there was a couple o' young chaps comed about here, for their holiday, as I aye thought to mysel'. The wan o' them was uncommon outspoken in his manner, wan of them lads that's friends with every stranger at the first word, with a muckle mouth and teeth — dash em! — that would crunch a man's bones like a cannibal. T'other he was some kind of a student, aye fiddling about the grass and the rocks, and them kind o' nonsense pastimes. I heard the haill business with my ain ears, so it's no mystery to me. I was ploughing i' the lang park belonging to Tinwood then, with the two o' them somegate about the ploughtail, having their own cracks, with now and again a word to me—when all of a suddent the student, he stops, and he says out loud, 'There's coal here!' I paid little attention till I saw them baith get earnest and red in the face, and down on their knees aprying into something I had turned up with my plough; and then I might have clean forgot it—for what was I heeding, coal or no coal?—when the t'other man, the lad with the muckle mouth, he came forrard, and says

he, 'Here's my friend and me, we've made a wager about this land, but we'll ne'er be able to settle it unless awl's quiet, and you never let on that you've heard what he said. He's awl wrong, and he'll have to give in, and I'll be the winner, as you'll see; but hold you your peace, neighbour, and here's a gold guinea to you for your pains.' Lord preserve us, I never airned a goold guinea as easy in my life! I wush there was mair on them coming a poor body's way. I held my whisht, and the lads gaed their way; but eugh, eugh! eh, man, if I had but knawn! I would ne'er have been tramping this day o'er the very grund I ploughed, to work in that pit, dash her! and me aughty years of age and mair."

"How, then, did it happen?" cried Horace, eagerly.

"But I'll hev to be agooin," said the pitman, lifting himself up with reluctance and difficulty—"the timekeeper yonder, he's a pertickler man, and has nae consideration for an old body's infirmities: though I'm wonderful comforted with the speerits, I'll no deny. Eyeh! eyeh! the old Squire, he was

a grand man, he was, as lang's he had it, and threw his siller about like water, and was aye needing, aye needing, like them sort o' men. Afore mony days, if ye'll believe me, there was word of his own agent, that was Maister Pouncet, the 'torney in Kenlisle, buying some land of him, awl to serve the Squire, as the fowks said; but when I heard it was *this* land, 'Ho, ho!' says I to mysel', 'there's more nor clear daylight in this job,' says I. So I held my whisht, and waited to see; and sure enow, before long came down surveyors and engineers, and I know not all what, and the same lad, with the muckle mouth, that was now made partner to Mr. Pouncet; and that was the start o' the pit, dash her! that's cost me twenty years o' my life and twa bonnie sons; and them's the masters, blast them! that take their goold out o't year after year, and wunna spare a penny-piece for the aged and frail. Eyeh, that's them!—but it's my belief I'll see something happen to that lad with the muckle mouth before I die."

"And what did your old Squire say, eh,

when the land was found so rich?" said Horace; "did he try to break the bargain, and take it back again?"

"Him!" cried the decrepid old labourer, now once more halting along in the fresh sunshine, with his shadow creeping before him, and his "Davy" creaking from his bony finger—"him! a man that knawed neither care nor prudence awl his born days; and to go again his own 'torney that had done for him since ever he came to his fortin', —not him! He said it was confoonded lucky for Pouncet, and laughed it off, as I hev heard say, and thought shame to let see how little siller he got for that land. He never had no time, nor siller nouther, to goo into lawsuits, and his own agent, as I tell you; besides that he was a simple man, was the Squire, and believed in luck more nor in cheating. Eyeh! eyeh! but I blamed aye the chield with the muckle mouth. He was the deevil that put harm into the t'other lawyer's head; for wan man may be mair wicked nor anither, even amang 'torneys. It wasn't lang after till he left this country.

Eh, lad, yon man's the deevil for cunning. I wouldna trust him with his own soul if he could cheat that—dash them a'! I mought have keeped on my kailyard, and seen my lads at the tail of the plough, if, instead of his pits and his vile siller, them fields had still been part o' Tinwood Farm!"

And the poor old man relapsed out of the indignation and excitement into which the questions of Horace, his own recollections, and, above all, his "dram," had roused him, into the same querulous discontented murmurs over his own condition which had first attracted the notice of his young companion. Horace sauntered by him with a certain scornful humour to the mouth of the pit—untouched by his misfortunes, only smiling at the miserable skeleton, with his boasted wisdom, his scrap of important unused knowledge, and his decrepid want and feebleness. *He* set his foot upon this new information with the confidence of a man who sees his way clear, and with a strange, half-devilish smile looked after the poor old patriarch, who had known it for twenty years and made nothing

of it. The idea amused him, and the contrast: for pity was not in Horace Scarsdale's heart.

CHAPTER XIX.

As he started on his rapid walk back to Kenlisle at a very brisk pace, for the distance was between four and five miles, and business hours were approaching, Horace put together rapidly the information he had obtained. Perhaps a mind of different calibre might have rejected the pitman's inference, and benevolently trusted, with the defrauded Squire, that Pouncet and his partner were only "confoonded looky" in their land speculation—such things have happened ere now honestly enough. Horace, however, was not the man to have any doubt on such a subject. His mind glanced, with a realization of the truth, quick and certain as the insight of genius, along the whole course of the affair, which ap-

peared to him so clear and evident. How cautious, slow Mr. Pouncet, in most matters a man of the usual integrity, had been pounced upon by the sudden demon which appeared by his side in the shape of his clever clerk: how his mind had been dazzled by all the sophisms that naturally suggested themselves on this subject: how he had been persuaded that it was a perfectly legitimate proceeding to buy from the needy Squire these lands which at present to all the rest of the world were only worth so little, and which concealed, with all the cunning of nature, the secret of their own wealth. The Squire wanted the money, and was disposed to sell this portion of his estate to any bidder; and even if he were aware of the new discovery, had *he* either money or energy to avail himself of it? Horace knew, as if by intuition, all the arguments that must have been used, and could almost fancy he saw the triumphant tempter reaping the early harvest of his knavery, and stepping into a share of his victim's business, and of the new purchase which was made in their joint names. These coal-pits

were now a richer and more profitable property than the whole of Mr. Pouncet's business, satisfactory as his "connection" was; but Horace was very well able to explain to himself how it was that the career of Mr. Stenhouse at Kenlisle had been very brief, how all Mr. Pouncet's influence had been exerted to further the views of his partner elsewhere, and how it happened that the stranger's reception showed so much ceremonious regard and so little cordiality. With a certain sense of envy and emulation, the young man regarded this new comer, who held another man, repugnant and unwilling, fast in his gripe, and had him in his power. It is *chacun a son gout* in matters of ambition as well as in other matters. There was something intoxicating to the mind of Horace in this species of superiority. To have command secretly, by some undisclosable means, of another individual's will and actions: to domineer secretly over his victim by a spell which he dared neither resist nor acknowledge; this was something more than a mere means of advancement; independent of all results, there was a fascina-

tion indescribable in the very sensation of this power.

And it was this power which he himself had acquired over these two men, so totally unlike each other, who would see him to-day, unsuspicious of his enlightenment, and this evening meet him at the social table, which already won such influence, put under a painful constraint. Horace exulted as he thought of it, and brushed past the early Kenlisle wayfarers with such a colour on his cheek, and a step so brisk and energetic, that not one of them believed the tales to his disadvantage, and furtive hints of having been seen in unnameable places, which began to be dropped about the little gossiping town. He had only time to make a hurried toilette, deferring to that more important necessity, the breakfast, which he had no leisure to take, and to hasten to "the office," where he sat punctual and composed at his desk, for full two hours before his companion of the previous night appeared, nervous and miserable, at his post, with an aching head and trembling fingers. Horace glanced across with cool contempt at this

miserable as he entered. He was conscious that he himself, in his iron force of youth and selfishness, looked rather better and more self-controlled than usual under the inspiration of his new knowledge, and he looked at his weaker compeer with a half-amused, contemptuous smile. This very smile and disdain had their effect on the little circle of spectators, who all observed it with an involuntary respect, and forgot to think what might be the heart and disposition of this lofty comrade of theirs, in admiring homage to the coolness of his insolence and the strength of his head.

Meanwhile, thoughts at which they would have stood aghast mingled in the busy brain of Horace with the drier matters of daily work which passed through his hands. Upon which of these two men who were in his power should he exercise that unlooked-for empire? Should he frighten Mr. Pouncet out of his wits by disclosing to him his new discovery? He was certainly the most likely person to be frightened with ease; but this did not suit the ideas of Horace. He was tired of Kenlisle,

and found no advantage in a residence there, and he felt in Mr. Stenhouse a kindred spirit with whom he could work, and under whom his fortune was secure. Thus the virtuous young man reasoned as he sat at his desk, the bland object of his thoughts passing him occasionally with smiles upon that wide mouth which the old pitman remembered so well. It might not be possible for Horace to refrain from waving his whip over the head of his present employer, but it was the stranger upon whom for his own advancement he fixed his eyes. Mr. Stenhouse was a man much more able to understand his gifts, and give them their due influence, than Mr. Pouncet would ever be; and in the excitement and exaltation of his present mood Horace thrust from his mind more consciously than ever before that anxiety about his father's secret which had moved him to so much eagerness ere he began to have affairs and prospects of his own. He became contemptuous of it in his youthful self-importance and sense of power. He was dazzled to see how his own cool head and unimpressionable spirit, the undeviating

iron confidence of his supreme self-love, had imposed upon his comrades in the town—if comrades they could be called, who won no confidence and received no friendship from him; and he was elated with the new power he had gained, and ready to believe himself one of those conquerors of fortune before whose promptitude and skill and unfailing acuteness every obstacle gives way.

In this mood he filled his place in Mr. Pouncet's office during that day, meditating the means by which he should open proceedings in the evening. Mr. Pouncet, meanwhile, as it happened, by way of diverting his conversation with his former partner from matters more intimate and less manageable, had been pointing out to his notice the singular qualities of Horace, his remarkable position and subtle cleverness. Perhaps Mr. Pouncet would not have been very sorry to transfer his clever clerk to hands which could manage him better; at all events, it was a subject ready and convenient, which staved off the troublesome business explanations which had to be made between them. Mr. Pouncet had

committed himself once in his life, and betrayed his client; but he was a strictly moral man notwithstanding, and disapproved deeply of the craft of his tempter, even though he did not hesitate to avail himself of the profits of the mutual deceit. Twenty years had passed since the purchase of that "most valuable property," but still the attorney, whose greatest failure of integrity this was, remained shy of the man who had led him into it, reluctant to receive his periodical visits, and most reluctant to enter into any discussion with him of their mutual interest. So Mr. Pouncet talked against time when necessity shut him up *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Stenhouse, and told the stranger all about Horace; while Horace outside, all his head buzzing with thoughts on the same subject, pondered how to display his occult knowledge safely, and to open the first parallels of his siege. For which purpose the young man made his careful toilette in preparation for Mr. Pouncet's dinner-table, where the attorney's important wife, and even Mr. Pouncet himself, received the young clerk with great affability,

as people receive a guest who is much honoured by their hospitality. How he laughed at them in his heart!

CHAPTER XX.

HORACE laughed at the condescension of his hosts, but not with the laugh of sweet temper or brisk momentary youthful indignation. There was revenge in his disdain. It fired his inclination to exhibit the power he had acquired, and make the most of it. The party was few in number, and not of very elevated pretensions; a few ladies of the county town, in sober but bright-coloured silk and satin, such as was thought becoming to their matronly years, who had plenty of talk among themselves, but were shy of interfering with the conversation of "the gentlemen"; and a few gentlemen, the best of their class in Kenlisle, but still only Kenlisle townsmen, and not county magnates. Even the

vicar was not asked to Mr. Pouncet's on this occasion; the show was very inconsiderable—a fact which Horace made out with little difficulty, and which Mr. Stenhouse's sharp eyes were not likely to be slow of perceiving. Nothing, however, affected the unchangeable blandness of that wide-smiling mouth. Before the dinner was over, Horace, by dint of close observation, became aware that there *was* a little bye-play going on between the hosts and their principal guest, and that Mr. Stenhouse's inquiries about one after another of the more important people of the neighbourhood, and his smiling amazement to hear that so many of them were absent, and so many had previous engagements, had an extremely confusing effect upon poor Mrs. Pouncet, who did not know how to shape her answers, and looked at her husband again and again, with an appeal for assistance, which he was very slow to respond to. Horace, however, permitted Mrs. Pouncet and her accompanying train to leave the room before he began *his* sport; and it was only when the gentlemen had closed round the table, and when, after

the first brisk hum of talk, a little lull ensued, that the young man, who had hitherto been very modest, and behaved himself, as Mr. Pouncet said, with great propriety, suffered the first puff of smoke to disclose itself from his masked battery, and opened his siege.

"Did you see in yesterday's *Times* a law-case of a very interesting kind, sir?" said this ingenuous neophyte, addressing Mr. Pouncet—"Mountjoy *versus* Mortlock, tried in the *Nisi Prius*. Did it happen to strike you? I should like extremely to know what your opinion was."

"I was very busy last night. I am ashamed to say I get most of my public news at second hand. What was it, Scarsdale? Speak out, my good fellow; I daresay your own opinion on the subject would be as shrewd, if not as experienced, as mine; a very clever young man—rising lad!" said Mr. Pouncet, with an aside to his next neighbour, by way of explaining his own graciousness. "Let us hear what it was."

Mr. Stenhouse said nothing, but Horace saw that he paused in the act of peeling an

orange, and fixed upon himself a broad, full smiling stare; a look in which the entire eyes, mouth, face of the gazer seemed to take part—a look which anybody would have said conveyed the very soul of openness and candour, but which Horace somehow did not much care to encounter. Mr. Stenhouse looked at him steadily, as if with a smiling consideration of what he might happen to mean, glanced aside with a slight malicious air of humour at Mr. Pouncet, gave a slight laugh, and went on peeling his orange. The whole pantomime tended somehow to diminish the young schemer's confidence in his own power, which naturally led him to proceed rather more vehemently and significantly than he had intended with what he had to say.

"The case was this," said Horace, with somewhat too marked a tone—"Mortlock was a solicitor and agent among others to a Sir Roger Mountjoy, a country baronet. Sir Roger was very careless about his affairs, and left them very much in his agent's hands; and, besides, was embarrassed in his circumstances, and in great need of ready money. Mortlock

somehow obtained private information concerning a portion of his client's land which more than tripled its value. After which he persuaded the baronet to sell it to him at a very low price, on pretence that it was comparatively worthless, and that he made the purchase out of complacency to meet the pressing needs of his patron. Immediately after the sale a public discovery was made of a valuable vein of lead, which Mortlock immediately set about working, and made a fortune out of. A dozen years after, when the baronet was dead, his heirs brought an action against the solicitor, maintaining that the sale was null and void, and demanding compensation. Only the counsel for the plaintiff has been heard as yet. What do you think they will make of such a plea?"

Mr. Pouncet set down upon the table the glass he was about raising to his lips, and spilt a few drops of his wine. He was taken by surprise; but the momentary shock of such an appeal, made to him in the presence of Stenhouse, and under *his* eye as it was, did not overwhelm the old lawyer as Horace,

in the self-importance of his youth, imagined it would. His complexion was too gray and unvarying to show much change of colour for anything, and the only real evidence of his emotion were these two or three drops of spilt wine. But he cleared his throat before he answered, and spoke after a pause in a very much less condescending and encouraging tone.

"It depends altogether on what the plea *is*," said Mr. Pouncet; "the story looks vastly well, but what is the plea? Can *you* make it out, Stenhouse? Of course, when a man acquires a property fairly at its fair value, no matter what is found out afterwards, an honest bargain cannot be invalidated by our laws. I suppose it must be a breach of trust, or something of the sort. You are very young in our profession, my friend Scarsdale, or you would have known that you have stated no plea."

"The plea is, of course, that the solicitor was bound to his client's interest, and had no right to make use of private information for his own advantage—and they'll win it. There,

my young friend, I give you my opinion without asking," said Stenhouse; "purchases made by an agent for his needy client are always suspicious, sure to create a prejudice to start with, and against the honour of the profession, Mr. Pouncet? Attorneys can't afford to risk a great deal—we don't stand too high in the public estimation as it is. It's a very interesting case, I do not wonder it attracted your attention. The baronet was a gouty, old spendthrift, perfectly careless of money matters—the solicitor, a sharp fellow, with an eye to his own interests; which," continued Mr. Stenhouse, with his frank laugh, and a humorous roll of his eye towards his former partner, "is a thing permissible, and to be commended in every profession but our own."

A general laugh followed this proposition. "You manage to feather your nests pretty well, notwithstanding; better than most of those other people who are encouraged to look after their own interests, and do not pretend to nurse their neighbour's," said one of the guests.

"Accident, my dear sir, accident!" said

Stenhouse, laughing; "to be truly and sublimely disinterested, a man must be an attorney. It is the model profession of Christianity. Here you must see innumerable personal chances slip past you, at all times, without a sigh. Why?—because you are the guardian of other men's chances, perpetually on the watch to assist your client, and forgetting that such a person as yourself is in the world, save for that purpose. That is our code of morals, eh, Pouncet? But it is high, certainly—a severe strain for ordinary minds; and as every man may follow the common laws of nature, save an attorney, it follows that an attorney, when he is caught tripping, has more odium and more punishment than any other man. Mr. Pouncet, you agree, don't you, with all I say."

And Mr. Stenhouse, once more with his broad laugh of self-mockery and extreme frankness, directed everybody's attention to his old partner, who by no means relished the conversation. Mr. Pouncet's glass remained still untasted before him on the table—he himself was fidgety and uneasy — the only

answer he made was a spasmodic attention to his guests, to encourage the passing of the bottle, and a sudden proposition immediately after to join the ladies. Not one individual at his table had the slightest sympathy with the old lawyer—every man chuckled aside at the idea that all these arrows were "in to old Pouncet;" not that he was generally disliked or unpopular, but sublime disinterestedness was so oddly uncharacteristic of the man, and unlike the ordinary idea of his profession, that everybody was tickled with the thought. Next to Mr. Pouncet, however, the person most disconcerted of the party was Horace, whose "power" and menace were entirely thrust aside by the jokes of the stranger. The young man went in sulkily, last of the party, to Mrs. Pouncet's drawing-room, dimly and angrily suspecting some wheel within wheel in the crafty machinery which he had supposed his own rash hand sufficient to stop. Perhaps Mr. Pouncet, after all, was the principal criminal, and Stenhouse only an accomplice—certainly appearances were stronger against the serious and cautious man, evidently an-

noyed and put out by this conversation, as he was, than against the bold and outspoken one, who showed no timidity upon the subject. But Horace's ideas were disturbed, and his calculations put out. He had no knowledge of the character of Stenhouse, when he exulted in the vain idea of having him "in his power." If things were really as he suspected, this was not an easy man to get into anybody's power; and Horace began to inquire within himself whether it would not be better to have a solemn statement made by the old pitman, to send for authority from Roger Musgrave, the old Squire's heir-at-law, and to come out on his own account in the grand character of redresser of injuries and defender of rights. That at least, stimulated by the influence of Mountjoy *versus* Mortlock, was in Horace's power.

While the young man hung about the corners of the drawing-room, turning over Mrs. Pouncet's stock of meagre Albums and superannuated Annuals, and pondering over his future proceedings, Mr. Stenhouse came up to him with his usual frankness. He was

ready to talk on any subject, this open-minded and candid lawyer, and spoke upon all with the tone of a man who is afraid of none.

"Well, Mr. Scarsdale! so you are interested in this Mountjoy and Mortlock business," said his new acquaintance—"a curious case in every way, if they can prove it. Want of legal wisdom, however, plays the very devil with these odd cases—it may be perfectly clear to all rational belief, and yet almost impossible to prove it. Perhaps something of the kind has fallen under your own observation—eh?"

"I have," said Horace, a little stiffly, "become suddenly acquainted with a case of a very similar kind."

"Aha, I thought so—I daresay there's plenty," said Stenhouse. "Capital cases for rising young barristers that want to show in the papers and get themselves known. Famous things for young fellows, indeed, in general—that is to say," he added, more slowly, "if the heir happens to be anybody, or to have friends or money sufficient to see

the thing out. In that case it does not matter much whether he loses or wins. Thinking perhaps of striking off from my friend Pouncet and establishing yourself, eh? Could not do better than start with such an affair in hand."

"I should be glad of more experience first," said Horace; "and, to tell the truth, I don't care for beginning by betraying old friends. Mr. Pouncet has behaved very liberally by me, receiving me when I had very little qualification."

"Pouncet!" cried Mr. Stenhouse—"you don't mean to say that Pouncet has been burning his fingers in any such equivocal concerns. Come, come, my young friend, we must be cautious about this. Mr. Pouncet is a most respectable man."

"Mr. Stenhouse," said Horace, "I was, as it happens, at Tinwood this morning—perhaps you know Tinwood?"

"A little," said the other, with his most engaging smile.

"There I met, partly by chance," said Horace, feeling himself provoked into excite-

ment by the perfect coolness of his antagonist, "an old man, who gave me an entire history of the first finding of the coal."

"Ah, it was a very simple business. I was there myself, with a scientific friend of mine; a blind fellow, blind as a mole to everything that concerns himself—feeling about the world in spectacles, and as useless for ordinary purposes as if he had moved in a glass case," said Mr. Stenhouse; "extraordinary, is it not? It was he who found the first traces of that coal."

"And found them," said Horace, pointedly, "before the land was purchased by Mr. Pouncet and yourself from Squire Musgrave of the Grange."

"Ah, we had better say as little as possible about that in the present company. Pouncet mightn't like it—it might look ugly enough for Pouncet if there was much talk on the subject," said Mr. Stenhouse, sympathetically glancing towards his old partner, and subduing his own smile in friendly deprecation of a danger in which he seemed to feel no share.

"And how might it look for you?" said Horace, with his rough and coarse boldness.

Mr. Stenhouse laughed, and turned round upon him with the most candid face in the world.

"My dear fellow, Squire Musgrave was no client of mine!" said the good-humoured lawyer. "The utmost punctilio of professional honour could not bind *me* to take care of his interests. I was a young fellow like yourself, with my fortune to make. You put it very cleverly, I confess, and it might look ugly enough for Pouncet; but, my excellent young friend, it is nothing in the world to me."

"Yet you were Mr. Pouncet's partner," said Horace, with a certain sulky virulence, annoyed at the small success of his grand *coup*.

"After, my dear sir, after!" cried Mr. Stenhouse, with another of his *éclats de rire*.

Horace made a pause, but returned to the charge with dogged obstinacy.

"I know Roger Musgrave," he said, "and I know friends who will stand by him as

long as there is the slightest hope——"

"Ah, very well, as you please, it is not my concern; and it is quite likely you might make a good thing out of Pouncet," said Mr. Stenhouse. "By-the-bye, now I think of it, come and breakfast with me to-morrow, when we can speak freely. I have no particular reason to be grateful to him, but Pouncet and I are very old friends. Come to the 'George' at eight o'clock, will you? I'd like to inquire into this a little more, for old Pouncet's sake."

So they parted, with some hope on Horace's side, but no very great gratification in respect to his hoped-for "power."

CHAPTER XXI.

It was with a slightly accelerated pulse that Horace went next morning to the "George" to keep his appointment. He seemed to have put his own fortune on the cast, and temper and ambition alike forbade his drawing back. Either he must secure Stenhouse as an ally and coadjutor, bound to him by secret ties of interest, or else he must establish his own career upon the charitable and Christian work of restoring to Roger Musgrave such remnants of his inheritance as it might be possible to rescue from the hands of Pouncet and Stenhouse. This last alternative was not captivating to Horace. It was not in his nature, had he been the instrument of such a restoration, to do it otherwise than

grudgingly. He was too young as yet to have added any great powers of dissimulation to his other good qualities, and his own disposition sided much more with the clever operator who served his own interests by means of some unsuspecting simpleton, than with the simpleton who permitted himself to be so cheated. Accordingly, his thoughts were very reluctant to undertake that side of the question—still, it was his alternative, and as such he meant to use it.

Mr. Stenhouse entertained his young visitor sumptuously, and exerted all his powers to captivate him. He, too, was ignorant of the person he had to deal with, and did not suspect how entirely uninfluenceable by such friendly cajoleries was the young bear of Marchmain, who had scarcely heart enough to be flattered by them, and had acuteness sufficient to perceive the policy. He began, at length, cautiously enough, upon the subject of their last night's conversation—cautiously, though with all his usual apparent candour and openness of tone.

"Let us have a little talk now about this

business, this hold which you think you have got over poor old Pouncet," said Mr. Stenhouse. "Do you know, my dear fellow, Pouncet has been established here some thirty years, and the people believe in him; do you think they will take your word, at your age, against so old an authority? I advise you to think of it a little, my friend, before you begin."

"My word has very little to do with it," said Horace; "of course, I know nothing of the transaction except by evidence, which has satisfied my own mind; and Squire Musgrave was quite as well known, while he lived, as Mr. Pouncet. Besides, it is your own opinion that the public verdict is always against the attorney; and then," said Horace, with a slight irrepressible sneer at his own words, "we have all the story in our favour, and the sympathy which everybody feels for a disinherited heir."

"But then, your disinherited heir has not a penny in his purse, nor the means of raising one—a private in a marching regiment," said Stenhouse, with a laugh; "you yourself are one or two-and-twenty at the outside, have

spent a year in Mr. Pouncet's office, and do not assert yourself, so far as I am aware, to have any command of capital. How are you to do it?—your father, eh?—your father has a place in the country, and perhaps influence—you mean to seek support by his means?"

"My father," said Horace, rudely enough, "has no influence—and, if he had, would never use it for me; my father is my greatest enemy, or takes me for his, which is the same thing."

"That is very extraordinary," said Stenhouse, with a sudden appearance of interest; "takes you for his enemy?—how is that?—there is surely some mystery here."

"I don't see that it matters at all to what we were speaking of," said Horace. "Look here, Mr. Stenhouse, I'll speak plainly: Pouncet and you are in the same boat—if you don't actually lose money by having this brought to a trial, you'll lose reputation—I know you will. I know well enough the thing was your doing. I don't pretend to be very clever," continued Horace; "but I think I know a man when I see him. It was you who found out the secret about that land—

it was you who put the affair into Pouncet's head—it was you who managed it all along—the success of the undertaking belongs to you, and you know it. Now, look here—perhaps there's no legal hold upon you; but you are a flourishing man, with people who believe in you, as much as some other people believe in Mr. Pouncet. If this matter should come to a trial, how would your reputation come out of it? I ask you boldly, because you know better than I do the whole affair."

"And am not afraid of it, I assure you, my dear fellow; go on as briskly as you please, so far as I am concerned," said Stenhouse; "but though I don't care for this, I care for *you*. You have a natural genius for this kind of work, not often to be met with. Pouncet would not understand it, but I do. I'll tell you what, Scarsdale—you can't do me any harm, but it is quite likely you might do me service. Another man most probably would send you off with a defiance, but I am not so liable to offence as most people; I never found it pay, somehow. You can't do me any harm, as I tell you; but you are bold and

capable, and might be extremely useful to me: whilst I for my share could probably advance your prospects. Pouncet was telling me something about you yesterday, but I did not hope to have so clear a specimen of your powers. I want a confidential man in my own office. What do you say to leaving Pouncet and transferring your services to me?"

"I should have perhaps a few questions to ask, in the first place," said Horace, who, elated with this sudden success, the first fruits of his "power," though his antagonist concealed it so skilfully, was by no means disinclined to be insolent; "about remuneration and prospects, and how I should be employed; for I do not hold myself a common clerk, to be hired by any man who pleases," added the young man, with something of the rude arrogance that was in him. It was a new phase of his character to his observant new friend.

"So I understand," he said gravely, but with a twinkle of sarcasm in his eye, which disconcerted Horace. "I shall be glad to hear the facts of your own private concern

from yourself, and you may reckon on my best advice. As for the terms of your engagement, if you enter upon one with me, these, of course, you must consider on your own account, without suffering me to influence you. I shall look after *my* interests, to be sure," added Mr. Stenhouse, with that charming candour of his, "and you must attend to yours; and if you make up your mind afterwards to attack Pouncet on behalf of your friend Musgrave," he continued, with a pleasant smile, "why, well and good—you must follow your fancy. In the meanwhile, I have no doubt I can employ you to good account, and give you more insight into business than Pouncet could. Time for the office—eh? I thought so. Well, you must consider my proposal; no hurry about it—and let me know how you have decided; I'll mention it to Pouncet, that there may be no difficulty there. Good morning, my young friend; you have a famous spirit, and want nothing but practice; and there is no saying what light you and I together may succeed in throwing on your own affairs."

Thus dismissed, Horace had no resource but to take his hat, and shake the smooth hand of Mr. Stenhouse, which grasped his with so much apparent cordiality. The young man went to his business with a strange mixture of sensations: humiliated, because he had suffered a seeming conquest, and his antagonist had clearly borne away the victory, so far as appearances were concerned; and flattered and excited at the same time by the substantial proof he had just received that his threat had not been in vain. Advancement greater and more immediate than to be made the "confidential man" of a solicitor in excellent practice, after one brief year of apprenticeship in Mr. Pouncet's office, he could not have hoped for; and his ambition was not of that great and vague kind which is always startled by the pettiness of reality. Then that last hint gave a certain glow of eagerness to his excited mind: light upon his own affairs!—light upon that mystery which shrouded the recluse of Marchmain, and made his only son his enemy and opponent! Horace had managed to content himself with inevitable

work, and even to excite himself into the ambition of making a fortune and his own way in the world; but that was a mere necessity, to which his arrogance bowed itself against its will; and the thought of leaping into sudden fortune, and the bitter long-fostered enmity against his father which continually suggested to his mind something which that father kept him out of, remained as fresh as ever in his spirit when they were appealed to. These thoughts came freshly upon him as he hastened to his daily occupation, and again began to revive the dreams of Marchmain. Twice he had succeeded in his private essays towards self-advancement. After an hour or two's reflection, with returning confidence he exulted to see his present and his future employer equally in his power, and made himself an easy victory in his own mind over the plausibilities of Mr. Stenhouse. Why should he not succeed as well in "his own affairs," and with equal pains overcome as easily the defences of his father?—and what if Stenhouse had actually some light to throw upon these concerns? Horace revelled within

himself with a secret arrogance and self-esteem as he pondered. What if it remained to him, in as short a time as he had taken to achieve these other successes, to dress himself in the grander spoils of imagination from which his father's enmity or interest kept him at present shut out.

CHAPTER XXII.

HORACE did not require to reflect much over the offer of Mr. Stenhouse; but, a singular enough preliminary, went out once more that evening to Tinwood, and again saw his old pitman, from whose lips he took down in writing the statement which he had previously heard. The man was old and might die, and though Horace dared not make the deposition authoritative by having the sanction of a magistrate, and thus letting daylight in upon the whole transaction, he received the statement, and had it signed and witnessed, as a possible groundwork of future proceedings—a strong moral, if not legal, evidence. With this document in his pocket-book, he saw Mr. Stenhouse, accepted his proposal, and con-

sented to his arrangements; then had an interview with Mr. Pouncet, more agreeable to his temper than anything he could extract from the more practised man of the world, to whom he had now engaged himself; the Kenlisle lawyer, it is true, was most deeply "in his power." Mr. Pouncet was very serious, uneasy, and constrained, disapproving, but checking the expressions of his disapproval by a certain anxious politeness, most refreshing and consolatory to his departing clerk.

Horace could not for his life have behaved himself generously or modestly in such circumstances. He took full use of his advantage, and was as arrogant and insolent as a man could be, quietly, who suddenly finds himself in a position to domineer over an older man who has employed and condescended to him. That half-hour was sweet to Horace. Mr. Pouncet's secret flush of rage; his visible determination to restrain himself; his forced politeness, and uneasy, unnatural deference to the studied rudeness of the young bear before him, were so many distinct expressions of homage dear to the young

victor's soul. *He* could strip the respectability off that grave, uneasy figure; *he* could hold up the man who had betrayed his trust to the odium of the world, and force out of his stores the riches he had gained so unjustly. Did he ever dream of doing it, or of suffering any one else to do it, honestly, as a piece of justice? Not he: but it delighted him to see the conscious culprit quail, and to recognize his own "power."

However, before setting out for his new sphere, a less comprehensible motive determined the young man to pay a parting visit to Marchmain. Perhaps he himself could not have explained why. Not, certainly, to see his sister; for Susan had no great place or influence in her brother's thoughts. To see his father, much more likely; for steady opposition and enmity is almost as *exigeant* as affection, and loves to contemplate and study its object with a clear and bitter curiosity, more particular and observing even than love. He reached Marchmain on a spring afternoon, when even Lanwoth Moor owned the influence of the season; when solitary specks of

gold were bursting on the whin-bushes, and purple stalks of heather-bells rose from the brown underground. Under that sunshine and genial spring stir the very house looked less desolate. The moor, spreading far around and behind, was sweetened and softened by the light and shadow of those changeful northern heavens; the sunshine brightened the windows with a certain wistful, outward warmth, as if the very light was cognizant of the blank within, and would have penetrated if it could. The low hills which bounded the horizon had greened and softened like everything else; and even the wistful clump of firs, which stood watching on the windy height nearest to the house, were edged and fringed with a lighter growth, touching the tips of their grim branches into a mute compliment of unison with the sweet movement of the year. Perhaps the most human token of all was a row of two or three homely flower-pots, outside the dining-room window of Marchmain: that was a timid evidence of the spring sentiment in Susan's solitary young heart, and it was something in such a desert place. Horace

observed it as something new, with a little ridicule in his smile. Perhaps his father, now that he was gone, had changed the manner of his sway over Susan: perhaps it was only he, the son, who was obnoxious to Mr. Scarsdale, and had to be put down. Horace was not jealous, nor troubled with any affectionate envy; he smiled with superiority and contempt. He, a man not to be trifled with, was quite indifferent how any one might choose to behave to such a trifle as a girl.

But Susan, it appeared, was out, when Horace, going round by the back of the house, startled Peggy out of her wits by his sudden appearance; and, what was more, his father was out, an unexampled incident. The old woman screamed aloud when she saw who her visitor was, and put out both her hands with an involuntary movement to send him away.

"The Lord help us all!—they'll come to blows if they meet!" cried Peggy, in her first impulse of terror. Then she put out her vigorous hand and dragged Horace in, as impatiently as she had motioned him away. "You misfortunate lad! what's brought ye

here?" said Peggy; "them that gangs away of their own will should stay away. Bless and preserve us! do ye think I dare to receive you here?"

She had not only received him, however, but fastened the kitchen-door carefully after him as she spoke. The very look of that kitchen, with Peggy's careful preparations going on for her master's fastidious meal—preparations so strangely at variance in their dainty nicety with the homely character and frugal expenditure of the house—brought all his old thoughts back to Horace as with a flash of magic. He had begun to forget how his father lived, and the singularity of all his habits. His old bitter, sullen curiosity overpowered him as he stood once more under this roof. Who was this extraordinary man, who preserved in a retirement so rude and unrefined these forlorn habits of another life? The dainty arrangements of the table, the skilful and learned expedients of Peggy's cookery; the one formal luxurious meal for which Mr. Scarsdale every day made a formal toilette; the silent man with his claret-jug and evening

dress, in that homeliest of country parlours, flashed before him like a sudden picture. Who was he?—and what had driven him here?

"So my father's out," said Horace; "why should not I come to see you, Peggy? Has he forbidden it? He can shut his own door upon me, it is true; but neither he nor any man in the world can prevent me if I will from coming here."

"Hush, sir! hold your peace!—the master says he'll have none of you here again, and I'm no the woman to disobey the master!" said Peggy. "And what do you mean by staying away a year and never letting us hear word of you, Mr. Horry? Is Miss Susan nobody?—nor me?—wan would think your love was so great for your father, that you never thought of no person in the world but him!"

"So it is—perhaps," said Horace, with a momentary smile; "and he's out, is he?—what is *he* doing out in daylight and sunshine? Gone to walk with his pretty daughter, Peggy, like a good papa? Ah! I suppose

these amiable little amusements would have begun sooner if I had but been wise enough to take myself away."

"To walk with Miss Susan?—alas!" cried Peggy; "but ye allways had a bitter tongue as well as himsel'. Na, he's out of a suddent at his own will, or rather at the good will of Providence, Mr. Horry, to prevent a meeting and unseemly words atween a father and son. What would ye have, young man? —and where have ye been?—and what are you doing? But come in here, for pity's sake, if ye'll no go away, and let me hear all your news, and I'll keep a watch at the back window against the master's coming in."

"My news is nothing, except that I am about to leave Kenlisle," said Horace, impatiently; "but, for heaven's sake, Peggy, who is this father of mine? *You* know, though nobody else knows—who is he? what does he do here? why does he hate me? why can't you tell me, and make an end of these mysteries? I'm a man now, and not a child; and here is your chance while we're by ourselves —tell me, for heaven's sake."

"You're very ready with your 'heaven's sake,' Mr. Horry," said Peggy, severely; "do ye no think another word might stand better? Heaven has but little to do with it all. The Lord help us! Who is he? 'Deed and he's a man, none so vartuous as he ought to be. And what does he here? Live as it pleases him, the Lord forgive him! without heeding God nor man—that's all about it. And as for hating of you, how much love is there lost, Mr. Horry? Do you think I could kep it on the point o' my finger? You never were wan to waste your kindness. How much of it, think you, gos to *him?*"

"It is well I can equal him in something," said Horace, with a careless but bitter tone. "However, Peggy, you'll tell nothing, as I might have known. I suppose I may wait to see Susan; there's nothing against that, is there? So, with your permission, I'll go and wait for her. Don't be afraid—only to the dining-room."

"The Lord preserve me!—and if he comes in!" cried Peggy, half addressing herself, and half appealing to her unwelcome visitor.

"Let him come in. I am in my father's house," cried Horace, with that cold, hopeless smile. Peggy knew it of old, and had seen it on other faces. She put out her hand with a fierce impatience, shaking it in his face.

"Oh, man! go away, and make me rid of ye! Go where ye please; if ever mortal man has a devil incarnate in him, it's when ye see that smile!"

Smiling still, Horace went coolly away to the dining-room, as he said; and Peggy, at her wit's end, as she was, found no better way of averting the evil she dreaded than by fastening the doors, so that they could not be opened from without, and clambering upstairs to watch at the elevated window of the store-room, from whence she could see her master's approach. Horace had never felt himself so entirely in command of the house. He paused at the door of the dull apartment in which he had spent so many hours and years, and where Susan's needlework, more ornamental now than of old, made a little unaccustomed brightness on the dark mirror of the uncovered table; but no sympathy for his young sister, shut up here

hopelessly during her early bloom of life, warmed his heart, or even entered his thoughts. He thought of himself—how he used to waste and curse the days in this miserable solitude, and what a change had passed upon his life since then. Listening, in the extreme silence, he heard Peggy go upstairs to her watch. He smiled at that, too, but accepted the safeguard; and, without any more hesitation, turned round, and went across the hall to his father's room.

The study; that dreaded, dismal, apartment; —with its dull bookcases set at right-angles, the hard elbow-chair standing stiffly before the table, the big volume laid open upon the desk, the stifling red curtains drooping over the window; his heart beat, in spite of himself, as he entered; he could scarcely believe his father was not there, somehow watching him, reading his very thoughts. With a sudden "Pshaw!" of self-contempt and temerity, he hastened forward to the table. There was no lock upon the little sloping desk which sustained the volume Mr. Scarsdale had been reading. Without hoping to find anything,

but with a vague thrill of curiosity and eagerness, Horace lifted the book, and opened the desk. It was full of miscellaneous papers—Peggy's household bills, and other things entirely unimportant; but among these lay some folds of blotting-paper. He opened them with a trembling hand; the first thing he saw there was a letter, which fell out, and which Horace grasped at, half-consciously, and thrust into his pocket; another fold concealed, apparently, the answer to it, half written, and hurriedly concluded. The young man ran his eyes over it with burning curiosity. It was addressed to Colonel Sutherland, and chiefly concerned an invitation from her uncle to Susan, which Mr. Scarsdale peremptorily declined. Then his own name caught his eye; the last paragraph abruptly broken off, as if the writer had thrown down his pen in impatience, and could continue no longer. These words, which conveyed so little information to him, burned themselves, notwithstanding, upon Horace's memory with all the vehement interest of unnatural hate:—

"As for my son, I do not choose to answer to any man for my sentiments and actions in respect to him. I held all natural ties as abrogated between us from the period you mention, when, as you say, he seems to have ceased to appear to me as my child, and I have only viewed him as a rival, unjustly preferred to me. I do not object to adopt your words; they are sufficiently correct; but I will suffer no question on the subject; let the blame be upon the head of the true culprit. As to the will ——"

Here the letter ended, with a dash and blot, as if the pen had fallen from the writer's fingers; it was this, evidently, which had driven him forth in wild impatience, stung by his subject. Horace read, and re-read the sentence, devouring it with his eyes of enmity. Then he restored it rudely to its place, put back the book, and left the room. He thought he had discovered something in the first flush of his excitement. It did not seem possible that he could have looked thus directly into his father's thoughts without discovering something. He no longer cared to

risk a meeting with him. In the tumult of his imaginary enlightenment he called to Peggy, hastily, that he was going away, and went out, as he entered, by the back door. Nobody was visible on the moor; the whole waste lay barren before him, under the slanting light of the setting sun. He put up the collar of his coat, set his hat over his eyes, and plunged along the narrow path among the gorse and heather, to Tillington, thinking still in his excited mind, and feeling in his tingling frame, that he had found out something; and knew more of the secret of his life than he had ever known before; deluded by his eagerness and enmity, and the excitement caused in him by the first stealthy investigation it had ever been in his power to make.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE little inn at Tillington, to which Horace betook himself for his night's lodging, had suffered little change from the day when he conducted his uncle there. Sam, it is true, was fighting the Caffres in Africa, far enough distant; but his mother had recovered her bustling good spirits, and his father his philosophy, and even Sergeant Kennedy, great and pompous as of old, dominated over the little sanded parlour, and fired the village lads with martial tales, unabashed, under Mrs. Gilsland's very eye. It was not to the sanded parlour, however, that Horace now betook himself. He was no longer the sullen country lad, whole idler and half gentleman, whose deportment had distressed Colonel Sutherland; and his old

gamekeeper acquaintances and alehouse gossips scarcely knew him, in his changed dress and altered manner. He was the nephew of "the Cornel," a name which Mrs. Gilsland and Sergeant Kennedy had made important in the village, and he was flourishing in the world and likely to come to higher fortune, circumstances which mightily changed the tide of public opinion towards him. Mrs. Gilsland received the young man with her best curtsey, and with profuse salutations. She opened the door of "the best room" for him, and suggested a fire as the evenings were still cold, and offered a duck for his supper, "or dinner, I was meaning," added the landlady, as Horace shrugged his shoulders at the chilly aspect of the room, and tossed his great-coat on a chair with lordly pretension and incivility. The good woman was daunted in spite of her indignation. "The Cornel," it is true, had shown no such scorn of her humble parlour, and she was not disposed to overestimate the comforts of Marchmain. Still, there is something imposing to the vulgar imagination in this manner of insolence. The

room had never before looked so mean to its mistress. She stopped herself in her unencouraged talk, and began to displace the faded paper ornaments in the fireplace, which concealed a fire laid ready for lighting, and kindled the wood herself with a somewhat unsteady hand. "It's just as it was when the Cornel was here, and he was very well pleased with everything," she said, half to herself. Horace took no notice of the implied apology and defence.

"Send me candles, please, and I'll see about dinner later," he said, loftily; "lights in the meanwhile, and immediately; never mind the fire—I want lights, and at once!"

Mrs. Gilsland withdrew, awed, but deeply wrathful. "I would like to know how many servants he had to wait upon him at Marchmain!" she exclaimed to herself as she left the room—"with his candles, and lights, and his immediantely! Immediantely, quotha! Eh me, the difference of men! Would the Cornel, or young Mr. Roger, order a person that gate? I would just say no!—but the like of an upstart like him!"

However, the candles did come immediately, in Mrs. Gilsland's best candlesticks, and in elaborate frills of white paper; and the duck was killed, as a great gabble in the yard gave immediate notice, and all the preparations which she could make set on foot instantly for her fastidious guest. Clean linen, snowy and well-aired, was spread upon the bed which "the Cornel" had once occupied; and greater commotion than even the advent of the Cornel himself would have caused diffused itself through the house. Meanwhile Horace addressed himself at his leisure to his immediate business. He had come thus far without being able to perceive that he had gained nothing by his inroad into his father's privacy. He was still possessed by the excitement of the act. All the way, while he walked as if for a race, he had been going over these unfatherly words, and they moved him to an unreasoning and unusual amount of emotion, rather more than a personal encounter would have done—confirming all his own sentiments, and adding to them a certain bitterness; but in the haste and fervor of his thoughts he

still imagined himself to have acquired something, and now took out the letter which he had seized and crumpled into his pocket, only in the idea that it might supplement and confirm his visionary information. It was, as he supposed, from Colonel Sutherland, and chiefly occupied with that earnest invitation to Susan which her father had declined. What concerned himself was brief enough, and was to the following effect:—

"You will probably say that I have very little right to address you on subjects so intimate and personal. I merely throw myself upon your indulgence, pleading our old acquaintance and connection. I have no *right* whatever to say a word, and I trust you will pardon all the more kindly what I do say on this account. Your son Horace is a very peculiar and remarkable young man. That miserable circumstance that happened when he was a child seems to have had an effect upon the boy unawares, little as he knows of it. And you, my dear Scarsdale, have you forgotten that this boy is your own child, and not a rival unjustly preferred to you? I ac

knowledge the wicked and desperate injustice of the whole proceeding, but Horace was not to blame. Would it not have been better, I appeal to you, to make an open effort to overthrow this iniquitous will, than to suffer it to produce results so deplorable? Hear me, I beseech you: receive the boy into your confidence before it is too late. It is your only means of really defeating and forestalling the evil objects of that posthumous punishment and vengeance. Suffer me to speak. I have no interest in it, save that of natural affection; let your own heart plead with me, as I am sure it will, if you permit it. Let him know his singular and unhappy fortune, and I am grievously mistaken in human nature if the attempt does not prove to you how little you need to apprehend from the temper and disposition of your son."

Horace read this over with an interest only more intense than the contempt which it produced in him. "The old twaddler!" he exclaimed to himself, in the first impulse of his disdain. That feeling moved him, even before curiosity. He could not take time to think

what it was which his father was urged to reveal to him, in his scorn of the anticipated result, the natural affection, the generous response, which his innocent old uncle believed in. Then he put the letter back into his pocket, and set his mind to consider what information he had really gained. What was it? Some vague intimation about a will, which Mr. Scarsdale had better have tried to set aside: some mysterious hint at posthumous punishment and vengeance, and his own singular and unhappy fortune; and on his father's side a declaration of dislike and enmity, but nothing more. That was what he had discovered —this was the information which had sent him in nervous haste out of Marchmain, and quickened his solitary walk over the moor— and this was all. He ground his teeth together when he perceived it, with savage disappointment and rage. He had been deceived —he, so boldly confident in his own powers, had allowed himself to be blinded and circumvented by his own excitement and childish commotion of feeling. For a moment he had enjoyed such command of his father's house

as a midnight thief might have gained, and had sacrificed all the results of that precious instant by a piece of involuntary self-deceit and ridiculous weakness, an indulgence absurd and contemptible. His feelings were not enviable as he sat in Mrs. Gilsland's dark little parlour, with the two faint candles burning, and the damp wood hissing in the grate. He might have borne to be deceived, but it was hard to consent to the humiliating idea of having deceived himself. However, he could make nothing better of it, and grinding his teeth did no harm to anybody, and certainly could do little service to himself. So he swallowed his mortification as he best could, put Colonel Sutherland's letter in his pocket-book, and addressed himself with what content he might to Mrs. Gilsland's duck. He was not without appetite, in spite of his disappointment. Then he sauntered into the public room, and opened his heart so far as to bestow a pint or two of ale upon his old acquaintances. Even this *divertissement*, however, did not withdraw his thoughts from his own affairs —he lounged at the door of the sanded parlour,

doing a little grandeur and superiority as he loved to do, but turning over his secret strain of thought without intermission, notwithstanding. A will!—then there was a will which concerned himself, and lay at the bottom of all these hints and mysteries. Wills are accessible to curious eyes in this country, in spite of all the safeguards which the most jealous care can take. The young man started when that idea interposed the flicker of its taper into the darkness. He raised his head again and renewed his courage: after all, his invasion of his father's private sanctuary had not been entirely in vain. There was comfort to his self-esteem, as well as a definite direction to his efforts, in the thought.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mr. Scarsdale had left his room and the house in a sudden flush of impatience beyond bearing, as his son had imagined. The very idea of the will to which Colonel Sutherland referred plainly in his letter was maddening to the solitary man. He could not bear the name, much less any discussion of this fatal document; and when he found himself constrained to mention it in his own person, a violent and angry petulance overpowered him; he dashed his pen to the ground, threw his paper into the desk, and rushed out of doors into the spring air, which had no softening effect upon him. Half consciously to himself, he had lived with more freedom since the departure of his son, and felt himself

relieved of a certain clog upon his movements; and it was not now so extraordinary an event as Horace had supposed that he should be out of doors in daylight and sunshine. Mr. Scarsdale had strayed deep into the moor in an opposite direction to Tillington, with thoughts even more bitter than those of Horace—thoughts which the well-meant intervention of the Colonel only raised to a passionate virulence. He, too, like his son, scorned, with a deep contempt, the tender simplicity of the old soldier, which neither of them comprehended; and coming back over that desolate waste of moorland to see his own desolate house standing out solitary and wistful in the bosom of the wilderness, Mr. Scarsdale realized, with a bitter superiority, the kind of house which was likely to call his brother-in-law master—the house full of warmth and kindliness, at which he sneered dismally, with the disgust of an evil spirit. The very desire which her uncle showed to have Susan with him increased the scorn of Susan's father. What did he want the girl for? To make an old man's pet of her,

and amuse himself with the fondness of dotage? Thus the recluse returned to his house to conclude his letter, and to intimate, in words few and strong, as befitted his present temper, his desire to receive no further "favours" in correspondence from Colonel Sutherland. He went in unsuspicious, where there seemed nothing to suspect, seeing, as he passed, Susan seated near the window with her work on her knee, and her wistful young eyes gazing across the moor. She had come in from her walk and her stolen interview with the one sole companion whom she ever had any intercourse with. She was leaning her head upon the pretty hand, which had dimpled into womanly roundness and softness, thinking over some stray thoughts put into her mind by the romantic Letty, and dispersing, with her own honest womanly good sense, the boarding-school absurdities of the half-educated girl whom Susan so devoutly believed to be her own superior; and perhaps wondering a little wistfully, as girls will, when, if ever, her fate and fortune would come to her over that blank of moorland. She

was not discontented, little as she had to content her; she was only a domestic woman—a household creature; word of flattery or voice of compliment had never sounded in her ears all her life. She could still brighten her dull firmament not a little with a new pattern for her muslin work, or a new story privately borrowed from Letty, though perhaps only out of the Sunday School library, and nothing remarkable in point of literature; but still wandering ideas will float into minds of nineteen, and eyes that have grown weary even over a new pattern might be pardoned if they searched the horizon with a little wistfulness, and wondered if nobody ever would appear again on the purple blank of Lanwoth Moor.

Susan, at least, was thinking so secretly to herself when her father entered, running over in her own mind the few, very few, people she had ever known. She did not count the turnpikeman and his wife and children upon the road, nor the chance cottager whom she knew by sight. But who were the others? The Rector, and Letty's father, the poor Presby-

terian minister, the first of whom she had heard preach, and the latter had spoken to her when she gave him a chance, which was seldom; Letty herself, who was older now, and had ideas of lovers, and made Susan, a little to her own confusion, shame, and amusement, her chosen confidante; Uncle Edward, dearest of friends, whom, alas, it was like enough she might never see again; and, yes—among so few it was impossible to omit him—Mr. Roger, who had thrown the gipsy's husband over the hedge, and had taken off his hat to her, and who was lost in the distant world and unknown mists of life. Which of them had Susan a chance of seeing across that moor? Nobody, poor child; not even the postman, the one messenger of brightness to her life; for it was too late for that emissary; but she sat at the window, with her work in one hand, leaning her head upon the other; perhaps dreaming of some figure which it would have lightened her heart to see, appearing in the evening light on the road across the moor.

She was still seated thus, and the light was failing, giving an excuse for her sweet wist-

ful idleness and half melancholy mood of thought, when Mr. Scarsdale suddenly flung open the door, and appeared, as he had once appeared to his daughter before, swift and sudden as a wind, white with passion, and lost in a fiery, silent excitement, which terrified and shocked her. He came close up to her, with a long, noiseless stride, and grasped her arm furiously: but for that grasp the man might have been a ghost, with his shadowy, attenuated form, his long open dressing-gown streaming behind him, his noiseless step, and face of speechless passion. Not entirely speechless either, though he might as well have been so for any meaning which she could comprehend in the words which fell hissing and sharp on Susan's ears.

"Where is it?" he cried, shaking her whole frame with the fury of his grasp — "where is it?—what have you done with it? Restore it instantly, dishonourable fool! Do you think it is anything to you?"

"What, papa?" cried Susan, trembling, and drawing back unawares with a shrinking

of terror. It was a strange interruption of her innocent girlish dreams.

"What!" he cried, holding her tighter—"what! Do you dare to ask me? Restore it at once, or I shall be tempted to something beyond reason. Child! idiot! do you think you can cheat me?"

Susan stood still in his hold, shaken by it, and trembling from head to foot—but she shrank no more. "I have never cheated you in all my life," she said, raising her honest blue eyes to his face—that face which scowled over hers with a devilish force of passion; was it possible that there could be kindred or connection between the two?

He looked at her with a baffled rage, incomprehensible to Susan. "There is neither man nor woman in the world, nor child either, who does not lie to me and deceive me!" said Mr. Scarsdale. "Do you suppose I do not know—do you think I have no eyes to see you smile over that old fool's fondling letters? Give it up this moment, or I swear to you I will cast you out of my house, and leave you

to find your way to him as you can! Give it up at once, I say!"

"Do you mean Uncle Edward's letter, papa?" asked Susan. "I will get it this moment, if you will let me go; all of them, if you please."

But instead of letting her go, he grasped her pained arm more fiercely.

"You know what letter I mean," he said; "that letter which only a fool could have written, and which I was a fool to think of answering. What would you call the child who takes advantage of her father's absence to go into his room and rob him of it? Was it for love of the writer?—was it for your miserable brother's information?—or is it a common amusement, which I have only found out because this was done too soon? Thief! have you nothing to say?"

Susan drew herself out of her father's grasp with a boldness and force altogether unprecedented in her, and grew red over brow, neck, and face.

"I am no thief—I will not be called so!" she said, in sudden provocation; then falling

as suddenly out of that unusual self-assertion, she continued, trembling, "Papa, I have never entered your room; I never went into it in my life except when you were there; I never robbed you; I know nothing even of what you mean."

Her father looked at her closely, with a smile of disbelief and a fixed offensive stare, which she could not tolerate. He did not attempt to lay hands upon her, but stood only looking at her with eyes which were incapable of perceiving truth or honesty, and saw only fraud and falseness. "Where is the letter?" he said. Those sincere young eyes, which everybody else in the world would have trusted, conveyed no security to him.

Susan turned away from him, with a sudden outbreak of tears—tears of mortified and passionate impatience. He was her father, in spite of the small tenderness he showed her, and had a certain hold upon her habit of domestic affection. She felt the injustice keenly enough, and she felt still more keenly that his eyes were intolerable, and that she could not bear them.

"I have no letter save those my uncle has sent me," she said, indignantly, when she had overcome her emotion; "they are all here in this box—I have no other. I can only repeat the same thing, papa, if you should ask me a hundred times—I have no letter but these."

And Susan opened the pretty inlaid box, with its key hanging to it by a bit of ribbon, which Uncle Edward had brought her, and which she had appropriated, with a fanciful girlish affection, to hold his letters—opened it hastily and threw out the little store upon the table with trembling hands. Some trifling circumstance, perhaps the mere odour of the sandal-wood which lined the box, recalling some subtle association to him, produced a start and flush of angry colour on Mr. Scarsdale's face. He thrust the little casket away with some muttered words which Susan could not hear, but, even in spite of that touch of nature, turned over with a cold suspicion the letters which it had contained. Nothing like what he sought was there, of course; but he was not convinced. No one else was in the

house, or had been here—so far as his knowledge went—save Peggy; even Susan did not know of her brother's hurried visit, and Peggy was beyond suspicion, even to Mr. Scarsdale; —his daughter, and she only, could be to blame.

"I know," he said, coldly, when he had scattered the good Colonel's letters over the table, throwing them scornfully from him, "that my desk has been opened and my papers stolen. You are clever in hiding, like all women; but such an artifice cannot deceive me, when my loss is so evident. Take this detestable thing away! the smell is suffocating," he cried, with an interjection of rage, and once more pushing violently from him the pretty box with its pungent odour. "But stay, understand me first; it is late, and you are young; I will not turn you out upon the moor to-night, little as you deserve my consideration; but if this letter is not restored to me before to-morrow, nothing in the world will prevent me expelling you from this house —do you hear? I will have no thief under my roof. I perceive you are ready to cry,

like all your kind. Crying is a very good weapon with some people; but I assure you it has no effect whatever on me."

Susan could not have answered for her life. She stood still, gazing at him with her eyes dilated, a convulsive effort of pride keeping in her tears, but a sob bursting in spite of her, from her suffocating breast. There she still stood after he had left the room, speechless, labouring to contain herself, even after the necessity for that effort was over. But when she dropped at length into a chair, and yielded to the hysterical passion of tears and sobbing which overpowered her, beneath all her shame, mortification, and terror, a guilty gleam of joy which frightened her shot through poor Susan's heart. She thought it guilty, poor child. She was dismayed to feel that sudden pang of hope and comfort breaking the sense of this calamity. To be expelled from her father's house, cast out upon the moor and upon the world, with the stigma upon her of having robbed and deceived him! She repeated over to herself that accumulation of horrors, to extinguish this furtive and unper-

missible glow of secret hope, and cried bitterly over her own wickedness when she found it inextinguishable; but even with that secret and unsanctioned solace, the thought was miserable enough to her youth and ignorance. To be turned away like a bad servant; to be called a thief; to be driven from her father's house; Heaven preserve her! a young girl alone and penniless—what could she do?

CHAPTER XXV.

In this stupefied condition of mind, stunned by the change which seemed about to happen, yet moved now and then by a strange intolerance and passionate inclination to resist and protest, Peggy found her young mistress when she came to spread the table for that hateful dinner, the thought of which made Susan's heart ache. The poor girl still sat listlessly by the table on which her letters, the treasures of her affectionate disposition, were still carelessly scattered, and where the pretty box stood open and empty, as Mr. Scarsdale had thrust it away from him. Susan was by no means above a fit of crying, and had her disappointments and vexations like another, little as there seemed to wish or hope

for within her limited firmament; but this listless attitude of despair was new to Peggy, who was somehow frightened to see it. What had happened? Had she expected a letter, and falling into a fit of passion not to receive any, had she thrown out recklessly on the table that cherished correspondence, the comfort of her life? But fits of passion were very unlike Susan. Peggy had come upstairs early, that she might have some private, confidential talk, and inform her of her brother's hurried visit; but she paused in anxiety and compassion before entering upon that subject. "Hinny, what ails you?" asked Peggy, with the kindly, local term of caressing, laying her hand softly on Susan's shoulder. The girl started, gazed in her face, and then suddenly recollecting this one, long, faithful friend, whom she must lose, hid her face upon Peggy's shoulder, and burst again into passionate tears.

"What is it then, hinny?—aye trouble, and nought but trouble. Bless us all, has the master been upon ye again? And what did ye know, poor innocent?" cried Peggy, caressing

the young head that leaned upon her; "has he found it out, for all the watch I made? Hauld up your head, and let me hear—it was none of your blame."

"Found out what?" cried Susan, grasping her suddenly by the hand.

"No great comfort if a person mun speak the truth—just that Mr. Horry was here when you were out. Yes, Miss Susan," said Peggy, "I ought to have told ye sooner, but what good? He came for no end as I could see, and departed the same. Aye the owld man—a bitter thought in his heart, and an ill word in his mouth. Eh, the Lord forgive us! To think *we* should have the bringing up of childer!—that can make sure of nothing to give them but our own shortcomin's! He said he was leaving Kenlisle, but no another word, and was out of the house before I could come down to ask him wherefore he was goin', and where."

"Horace!" cried Susan, who had followed this speech breathlessly, with an interest almost too eager for intelligence, and whose face had reddened with a painful insight, as it

came to an end. "Horace! Has Horace been here?"

She clasped her hands together with such an anxious entreaty not to be answered, that Peggy paused involuntarily. "Peggy," said Susan, under her breath, "don't tell papa—for pity's sake, don't tell papa! He will do nothing worse to me than he has threatened. I am only a girl—he would not strike me nor fight me. But Horace! Peggy, for mercy's sake, if you love me or any of us, let him believe that I did it. Let him never know that Horace has been here."

"There's something happened! Let me hear what it is," said Peggy, almost as anxiously, "and then I'll know what is behoving and needful. Eh, Miss Susan, you're ignorant and innocent yoursel', you moughtn't understand him. Let *me* hear what he said."

"He said nothing," said Susan, shaking her head mournfully, with a sadness very unlike Peggy's expectation, "but that I had stolen away a letter from his room while he was out. Oh, Peggy, I am so very, very thankful that I had not seen you, and did not know Horace

had been here! And he said if I did not give it back to him to-morrow, he would turn me away. Turn me away, Peggy, out of doors upon the moor, to go anywhere, or do anything I pleased! I, who never was farther than Tillington except once with Uncle Edward! I, who know nobody, and have no money, and no friends! To send me away from Marchmain, and from—from *you*, who care for me. Oh, Peggy, what shall I do?"

Peggy stood irresolute for a moment, wringing her hands. "The Lord help us all! If the devil has a man bound hand and foot, what can *I* do?" cried the faithful servant. "God preserve us! That's what it's come to. Eh, mistress, mistress! Did I think what I would have to put up with when I gave you my word? Let me go, Miss Susan. I've know'd him thirty year, and he's know'd me. I'll speak to him mysel'."

But Susan hung round her with a clasp which would not be loosed, entreating, with a voice scarcely audible, which, notwithstanding, went to poor Peggy's heart. "He will think *you* know—you will tell him — he will find it

out!" cried Susan; "and, Peggy, they will kill each other. Peggy, Peggy! think! father and son! Let him believe it was me; he will not kill *me*, and I am ready to go away."

"Poor lamb!" said Peggy, smoothing down the pretty fair braids of hair on Susan's young head, which had once more drooped forward on her own compassionate shoulder. "But it's no' her; I'm no thinking of her, bless her! It's him. God forgive him! He had but one chance, as any mortal could see. He had his childer, his daughter — an innocent that had no share in't, and was wronged as well as himsel'. And now the Lord help us! he'll bereave himsel', and send his one hope away. I'm no' thinking of you, hinny," said Peggy, tenderly, while a few slow tears began to fall, gleaming and large, on Susan's hair— "nor of me—one heart-break, more or less, is little matter to an owld woman; and if I wasna like to sink with fret and trouble, I would see it was best for you; but, oh, weary on the man himsel'! What's to become of

him? There's no more houp, as I can see, no more!"

Susan, sobbing upon Peggy's breast, naturally felt, in the youthful petulance of that sudden calamity, that it was herself who ought to be sorrowed for, and not her father. She raised herself a little, wiping her eyes, with a flush of momentary independence and involuntary self-assertion. For once in her life the forlorn pride and excess of unappreciated suffering, so dear to very young people, came in a flood of desolate luxury to Susan's heart. She thought of herself, lonely and friendless upon the moor, cast out from her home, and ignorant where to turn, with nobody in the world so much as thinking of her, or sparing a tear for her sorrow. Peggy mourning for Mr. Scarsdale—for her father, he who dwelt secure and supreme at home, and cast out his woman-child upon the world. Horace, for whose sin she was to suffer, gone away without caring to see her, without even saying where he had gone; and Susan in her youth and desolation all alone and friendless! The picture was sad enough in reality; and Susan lifted her

head with momentary pride from Peggy's breast, tears of self-lamentation flowing out of her eyes, and proud mortification and loneliness in her heart; not even Peggy felt for *her*.

"And I—what am *I* to do?" she said, half to herself, turning her wistful weeping eyes upon that moor which was the world to her at this moment, and no bad emblem of the world at any time to the friendless and solitary. It was true that Susan's heart had palpitated with one sudden flush of joy at the thought, beyond that moor and yon horizon, of reaching Uncle Edward, and the home of her dreams; but Uncle Edward was far off, and she had no means of reaching him. What was she to do?—wander on day and night, like a lady of romance, seeking her love, with nothing on her lips but "Uncle Edward" and "Milnehill"?—or lose herself and die upon those wistful far-extending roads, out of reach of love or human charity? Anything sad enough would have pleased Susan's imagination at the present moment. She could see no brighter side to the picture. Nobody in

the world cared for or sympathized with her strange dismal circumstances, and the only home she had ever known in the world was about to close its remorseless doors upon her. Darkness fell upon the moor, and the spring breezes blew chilly over it, but from that darkness and those breezes she might have no roof to shelter her after to-night.

From these fancies she was strangely enough interrupted. Peggy, absorbed in her own thoughts, and almost forgetting the young victim of this day's misfortunes, had not disturbed her hitherto. Peggy's own mind was wandering back through a painful blank of years and hopeless human perversity; but the sure touch of habit recalled her to herself more certainly than Susan's silent tears, or the melancholy thought of losing Susan, which, though she said little about it, lay heavy at her heart. The growing darkness startled her suddenly—"Gude preserve me!—and he must have his dinner, whether or no," said Peggy, darting forward to gather up the letters and restore them to their box. Not a moment too soon, for Mr. Scarsdale's study-door creaked

immediately afterwards, and his step was audible going upstairs to dress. Susan took the box out of Peggy's hands with youthful petulance, and left the room, carrying it solemnly, and proudly restraining her tears. Nobody should be offended again with the sight of Uncle Edward's present. Nobody should find herself in the way after this melancholy night; and the dinner, that dismal ceremonial—the dinner which Peggy could not forget, though Susan's heart was breaking—she had that trial, too, to get through and overcome. To meet her father's eye and sit in his presence all the miserable evening; to eat or pretend to eat for the last time at his table; and to do this all alone and unsupported, the poor desolate child feeling a certain guilt in her heart which she had not known when he spoke to her first—the secret consciousness, not to be revealed for her life, that if she had not taken the letter she knew who had done so; and that secretly, like a robber, Horace had been here.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE dinner passed as these formal lonely dinners had passed for years at Marchmain. There was no perceptible shade of difference in the manner of Mr. Scarsdale, who addressed to his daughter polite questions about the dishes she preferred, as he had been used to do to Horace, driving his son wild; and himself sat upright and stiff at the head of the table, dining, as usual, without any symptoms of the passion which he had exhibited to Susan. He was deeply angry, it is true, still, but he was entirely without alarm, believing, as a matter of course, that Susan must have taken his letter, and contemptuously receiving that instance of dishonourable conduct merely as a visible specimen of the womanish mean-

ness and cunning which belonged to such creatures, and which, perhaps, was scarcely to be considered guilt. He believed she would return it to him that evening. He did not believe she had boldness enough to retain any copy for Horace, and he knew that to herself it would disclose nothing; therefore, he showed no more passion, was no more repulsive than he always was, and scarcely deigned to turn his eyes more than usual upon his unfortunate child.

She sat there at table, with the light shining on her, answering him in humble monosyllables when he spoke—for Susan's heroics had failed long ere now—receiving humbly what he sent to her, but unable to eat a morsel, her heart almost choking her as it beat against her breast. It was not now the desolate moor, nor the forlorn idea of being thrust out homeless upon it to wander where she would, that oppressed Susan. It was the terror of being put to further question, of her father once more addressing her, as he was sure to do, about the theft, of which she no longer felt herself quite innocent. She could

scarcely restrain her start and thrill of terror when he turned his head towards her; her frame trembled throughout with desperate apprehensions; she feared herself, and her own ignorance of all the arts of concealment; she feared to say something or do something which would betray Horace; and she feared her father—that bitter tone of passion, that terrible incredulity of truth. The poor girl sat still, rigidly, upon her chair, with a feeling that this was her only safeguard, and that she must infallibly drop down upon the floor if she tried to move. When Peggy removed the cloth, and placed Mr. Scarsdale's little reading-desk, his glass and decanter, upon the table, Susan still sat there in spite of many a secret touch and pull from her humble and anxious friend. Peggy was alarmed, but durst not say anything to call the attention of her master; and at last brought Susan's work to her, and thrust it into the poor child's trembling fingers, with a look and movement of anxious appeal. Susan took the work mechanically, and applied herself to it without knowing what she did; and thus the evening

went on with a thrilling, audible silence, of which, dreary and long though she had felt these nights many a time before, she had never been sensible till now. The long, gleaming, polished table, with the two candles reflecting themselves in its surface in two lines of light; the solemn figure of Mr. Scarsdale in his formal evening dress, seated upright at the head, turning with mechanical, automaton regularity the leaves of his book; the dead blank of the surrounding walls, no longer diversified even by a flicker of firelight; and Susan, almost as rigid and motionless as her father, afraid to breathe, lest it should call his attention to her; her ears tingling to the dreadful silence, and her heart fainting at thought of the words which some time this evening were sure to break it. Looking upon this evening scene, it was strange to believe that Susan Scarsdale could tremble at the idea of being thrust out of this cold and gloomy refuge, or find no comfort in the thought of trying rather the strange world and the solitary moor, which, unknown as they were, were still crossed by paths which led to human homes.

But she thought neither of the world nor the moor at the present moment. She would have been glad if she had been sufficiently courageous to fly out into the darkness and lose herself for ever rather than meet this impending interview; but it was not in her to escape or run away. Susan's mind was the womanly development of that steady British temper which cannot deliver itself by violence, but must wait orderly and dutiful for the natural accomplishment of its destinies. She sat trembling but still, afraid of what she had to bear, doubtless, but incapable of running away.

The long night passed in this pause and silence, without a word said on either side. The tea came in, and was made and swallowed without any interruption of the blank. And still Susan's fingers moved at the work which she could scarcely see, and her father turned over the pages of his book. He perceived beyond doubt, as he sat mechanically reading to the bottom of every page, with that dull, steady attention which had neither life nor interest in it, the state of extreme emotion,

excitement, and desperate self-restraint in which his young daughter sat before him; but pity found no entrance into his heart. He permitted her to remain so, sitting late and beyond the usual hour of retiring, with a kind of diabolical patience on his own part, which checked the words a dozen times on his lips. He was satisfied to see the entire power he had over her, and at the present moment had no thought of his threat, or of carrying it out. Perhaps even to him the room would have been more desolate, the dismal evening longer, had there been no young figure there, humbly ministering to him when occasion was, keeping respectful silence, bearing, without a complaint or effort to enliven them, these tedious, miserable hours; but he had no objection to see her suffer. At length, when the chill of almost midnight began to creep into that room where they had ceased to have any fire, Mr. Scarsdale's own physical sensations moved him. He closed his book, and as he closed it, saw Susan shiver in the climax of her agonies of anticipation. She should not be balked this time, and at last he spoke.

"I presume, Susan," he said, with a little solemnity, "that you have made up your mind."

"Papa?" said Susan, with a gasp of inquiry. Made up her mind to what? He so seldom addressed her by her name that some forlorn hope of his heart relenting towards her entered her head. Perhaps some lingering touch of compunction had taken him at the thought of sending her away.

"Must I speak plainer?" he said. "I presume you have decided what you are going to do. Are you ready to restore my letter, or to leave my house? Which? You understand the alternative well enough, and you know that I am not to be trifled with—have you the letter here?"

"Oh, papa!" cried Susan, clasping her hands, "I have not the letter here nor anywhere! I never had it! I never saw it! Oh, papa, did I ever tell you a lie, that you will not believe me now? And how can I give it back when I never took it?—when I do not know what it is? Will you not believe me? I am speaking the truth."

"Where is my letter?" cried Mr. Scarsdale once more, growing white with passion.

Susan sat looking at him, trembling, unable to speak; her lips moved, but he could not hear what she said. She could hardly hear herself say under her breath, "I cannot tell! I do not know!" Her terror had taken breath and voice away from her. How could she answer such a question?—she did not know—and yet she did know. Oh, Horace! She could have been so much bolder, so much stronger, if she had never known of his coming there.

"You are obdurate, then, and determined!" cried the father. "You think, perhaps, your brother will take up your cause and protect you. Fool! do you suppose he cares for you more than for an instrument; or your meddling uncle, who has made perpetual mischief since his prying visit here. Think! I give you one opportunity more: will you restore me that letter—once for all, yes or no?"

Susan staggered up to her feet, hysterical and overwhelmed.

"You may turn me away out of the house!" she cried; "you *may* do it, for you have the power—you may kill me, if you please; but you cannot make me give back what I never saw and never touched in my life!"

Mr. Scarsdale looked at her intently, as if thinking that his eyes, fiery and burning, could overcome her if nothing else would. "In that case," he said, with cold passion, "this is our last meeting—the last occasion on which I shall have anything to say to you. I am now alone, and shall remain so while I live. Be good enough to give Peggy directions where your wardrobe is to be sent. In consideration of your youth, I give you the shelter of my roof to-night; but I trust I shall not need to encounter another such interview. Good-bye—I wish you better fortune in your future life than you have had here."

Susan held up her hands, overpowered, in spite of herself, by the position in which she stood.

"Father, where can I go?" she cried,

with a wild appeal. He looked at her once more, fixedly and firmly.

"You know that much better than I can tell you. Good-bye," he said; and so left the room, with those long, silent, passionate steps, the light he carried gleaming upon his passionate face. Susan sank down where he had left her, alone and desolate. It was all over now!

CHAPTER XXVII.

SUSAN could not tell how long the interval was till Peggy came softly stealing into the room, in her big night-cap, and with a shawl over her shoulders. Peggy had waited till she heard Mr. Scarsdale sweep upstairs; she could see him out of her kitchen, where she sat in the dark, silent and watchful as her own great cat, with her eyes turned towards the closed door of the dining-room; and as soon as she supposed it safe, she made haste to the succour of his poor daughter. Susan was sitting in despair, where she had sat all the evening, pale, stupefied, and silent—not sufficiently alive to outward circumstances to notice Peggy's entrance; overpowered by her own personal misfortune scarcely more

than she was shocked in her sense of right, and ashamed to be obliged to expose her father's cruelty and injustice. A new horror on this point had seized her; she was not of that disposition which is pleased to appear in the character of victim or sacrifice; she would have suffered anything sooner than disclose the grim ghost of her own house to the public eye; notwithstanding this was what she must do, in spite of herself. When Horace left his home it was not an unnatural proceeding, nor was his father to be supposed greatly in the wrong; but she, a girl, what would any one think of a man who expelled *her* from his unfatherly doors? Her heart ached as this new thought fell with afflicting and sudden distinctness upon it, and she had now no more time to weep or bemoan herself. This night only was all the interval of thought or preparation to be permitted her. Already, indeed, in the chill of that deep darkness the day had begun which was to see her cast forth and banished; and already her mind sickened and grew feeble to think that she could not take a step upon the road

without revealing to some one how hardly she had been treated; and that her own very solitude, helplessness, and necessity were all so many mute accusations against the father who had no pity on her womanhood or her youth.

Notwithstanding, Susan was recovering command of herself, and felt that she had no time for trifling; and when she felt Peggy's hand on her shoulder, and heard the whisper of kindness in her ear, she did not "give way," as Peggy expected. She looked up with her exhausted face, almost worn out, yet at the same time reviving, full of what it was necessary to do.

"I am to go away," she said, slowly, with a quiver of her lip—"to-morrow—early—that he may never see me again. I am to tell you where to send my things, and to go away, Peggy, to-morrow."

"Weel, hinny, and it's well for you!" cried Peggy, herself bursting out into a fit of tears and sobbing. "Oh, Miss Susan, what am I that I should complain and grumble?—but it's all that heartbreaking face, my darling

lamb! What should I lament for? Nothing in this world but selfishness, and because I'm an old fool. The Lord forgive us!—it's a deal better for you!"

"Oh! hush, Peggy—don't speak!" said Susan—"and don't cry—I can't bear it! There is very, very little time now to think of anything; and you must tell me—there is nobody else in the world to tell me—what I am to do."

"Nobody else in the world? Oh, hinny, sweet!" cried poor Peggy. "There's a whole worldfull of love and kindness for you and the likes of you. There's your uncle—bless him!—that would keep the very wind off your cheek; and many a wan ye never saw nor heard tell o', will be striving which to be kindest. Say no such words to me—I know a deal better than that. I'm no' afraid for you," cried Peggy, with a fresh burst of sobbing—"no' a morsel, and I'll no pretend. I'm real even down heartbroken for the master and mysel'!"

Susan could not answer, and did not try; she was but little disposed to lament for her

father at the present moment, or to think him capable of feeling her loss. She put her hand on Peggy's, and pressed it, half in fondness, half with an entreaty to be silent, which the faithful servant did not disregard. Peggy took Susan's round soft hand between her own hard ones, and held it close, and looked at her with sorrowful, fond eyes. She saw the young life and resolution, the sweet serious sense and judgment, coming back to Susan's face, and Peggy was heroic enough to forget herself, for the forlorn young creature's sake.

"Ay, it's just so," said Peggy—"I knowed it from her birth. She'll never make a work if she can help it, but she'll never break down and fail. Miss Susan, there's one thing first and foremost you mun do, and you munna say no to me, for I know best. You must go this moment to your bed——"

"To bed! Do you think *I* could sleep, Peggy?" cried Susan, with involuntary youthful contempt.

"Ay, hinny—ye'll sleep, and ye'll wake fresh, and start early. You wouldn't think it, maybe, but I know better," said Peggy.

"You munna say no to me, the last night. Eyeh, my lamb! you're young, and your eyes are heavy with the sleep and the tears. I'll wake ye brave and early, but you mun take first your nat'ral rest."

"It is impossible. I do not know what to do—I have everything to ask you about. Oh, Peggy, don't bid me!" said Susan, crying; "and I have no money, and nobody to direct me, and I don't know how to get there!"

"Whisht! Youth can sleep at all seasons; but it's given to the aged to watch, and it doesna injure *them*," said Peggy, solemnly. "Go to your bed, my lamb, and say your prayers, and the Lord'll send sleep to his beloved; and as for me, I'll turn all things over in my mind, and do up your bundle: you mun carry your own bundle, hinny, a bit of the road—there's no help; and rouse you with the break of day, aud hev your cup of tea ready. Eh! the Lord bless you, darling! you're a-going forth to love and kindness, and a life fit for the likes of you. Am I sorry? No, no, no, if ye ask me a hunderd times—save and excepting for mysel'."

"Oh, Peggy, *you'll* miss me!" cried Susan, throwing herself into the arms of her faithful friend.

"Ay; maybe I will," said Peggy, slowly; "I wouldn't say—it's moor nor likely. Miss Susan, go to your bed this moment; ye'll maybe never have the chance of doing Peggy's bidding again."

Moved by this adjuration, Susan obeyed, though very unwillingly; and smiling sadly at the very idea of sleep, laid herself down for the last time on her own bed, "to please Peggy." But Peggy knew better than her young mistress. Through those deep, chill hours of night, while Peggy, in the same room, looked over all the different articles of her wardrobe, selecting the dress in which she should travel, carefully packing the others, and putting up the light necessary articles which must be carried with her, Susan slept soft and deep, with the sleep of youth and profound exhaustion. She had been tried beyond her strength, and nature would not be defrauded. When Peggy's task was over she sat down by the bedside, a strange figure in

her great muslin nightcap, and with her big shawl wrapping her close against the cold of the night. Peggy was too old to sleep in such circumstances; she sat wiping her eyes silently, though not weeping, as far as any sound went, thinking of more things than Susan wist of; of Susan's mother, who had succumbed so many years ago under the hard pressure of life; of the unhappy man in the next room, who was consuming himself, as he had consumed everything lovely and pleasant in his existence, by the vehemence and bitterness of his passions; and of yet another man who was dead, an elder Scarsdale, whose malevolent will worked mischief and misery, after he had ceased to have any individual action of his own. Susan would have thought it strange and hard if she had known that she herself, the darling of Peggy's heart, came in only at the end of this long musing upon others; and that even her brother, with his hard and ungenerous spirit, had a larger share in the sorrowful cogitations of the old family servant than she herself had. Susan was only a sufferer—she was young, she had friends who

would love her. Peggy would "miss" her sorely and heavily, but it was well for Susan. She had nothing to do with that long line of perversity, and cruelty, and guilt which ran in the Scarsdale blood.

The dawn was breaking gray—and faint when Peggy woke her young mistress. Susan sprang up instantly, unable to believe that the night was really over. Peggy had made everything ready for her, even to the unnecessary breakfast and comforting cup of tea downstairs, set before a cosy fire, and the girl dressed herself with a silent rapidity of excitement, listening to the directions which Peggy, not very learned herself, gave to her inexperience. Peggy, out of the heart of some secret treasure of her own, which she kept ready in case of necessity, and had done for many a year, with a prevision of some such want as the present, had taken an old five-pound note, which, stuffed into an old fashioned purse, she put into Susan's hands, as soon as her rapid toilette was completed.

"They'll no ask more nor that, Miss Susan," said Peggy; "they tell me they're

no as dear as postchays, them railroads. Now, hinny, I'll tell you what you'll do—you'll take across the moor to Tillington, to John Gilsland's, at the public; it's a long walk, but it cannot be helped, and it's early morning, and no a person will say an uncivil word to you. You'll tell him to get out his gig and take you immediate to the railroad, and you'll no pay him. Maybe he might impose upon you, though he's a decent man, if it wasna his wife; and maybe they might ask moor nor we think for at the railroad, and put ye about. Ye can tell him to come to us for his payment, and so I'll hear how ye got that far. Then, Miss Susan, ye'll make him take out a ticket for you—that's the manner of the thing—as near till the Cornel's as possible—you knaw the names of the places better nor me; and then, my darling lamb, you'll buy some biscuits and things, and take grit care of yoursel'; and you'll come to Edinburgh, so far as I can mind, first; and then you'll ask after the road to your uncle's. I canna believe, not me, that there's a man on the whole road as is fit to be oncivil to you. And you'll tell John

Gilsland to take your ticket for the best place; and look about you, hinny, till you see some decent woman-person a-goin' the same road, and keep beside *her*. Miss Susan, my dear lamb, you'll have to think for yoursel', and no be frightened. Eh, if I could but go and take care of ye! but the Lord bless us, hinny, we munna leave *him*, poor forlorn gentleman, all by himself."

"I will think of everything you say. I shall not be frightened. I'll take care, Peggy," cried Susan, through her tears.

"Whisht, whisht!—you're no to go forth greeting. My lamb, it's best for you—I'm no sorry for *you*," cried Peggy, with a sob; "here's your tea—a good cup of tea's a great comfort; and here's some sandwiches—eat them when you can on the road, for I see you'll no put a morsel within your lips at Marchmain. And now, my darling hinny, it's good daylight, and here's your bundle, and you'll hev to go."

The parting was sore but brief, and Susan stood without in the early sunshine before she knew what had happened to her, holding un-

consciously but tightly the bundle in one hand, and Peggy's old leather purse in the other, and hearing closed behind her, with an inexorable certainty and swiftness, which was poor Peggy's artifice to hide her own grief, and to shorten the pang of their farewell, that remorseless door of Marchmain. The desolate girl stood for a moment, blind with tears, on the step. Her fate was accomplished. There lay the moor, with the world beyond, strange, unfamiliar, bewildering—and her home, cold as it was, had closed upon her for ever. The first thrill of that reality was so dreadful to Susan, that she might have fallen and fainted upon the cold threshold where she still stood, holding by the doorpost to support herself, but for an incident that roused her. A window opened above — the window of her father's room. She looked up eagerly, thinking that perhaps he might have relented. Something, magnified and blurred in form by the tears which filled her eyes full, fell from above, and descended heavily at her feet; but no one appeared at the window, which was instantly closed. She stooped down to lift it, trembling.

It was another purse, not so homely as Peggy's, containing no note or word of farewell as she had hoped for a moment, but merely another five-pound note. With a strange access of anger and disappointment, Susan threw it from her upon the step of the door. "Give it to Peggy—*her* money is better to *me!*" she cried aloud, with involuntary indignation; and then brushing the tears from her eyes, set out upon her journey without looking behind, her whole heart and frame tingling with wounded feeling and injured pride.

That cold and grudging provision for her wants, thrown to her at the last moment, transported Susan with a sudden touch of passion foreign to her nature; it sent her across the moor at a speed which she could not have equalled under any other circumstances. The dew was on the early heather-bells, and the solitary golden flower-pods which lighted the dark whin bushes opened under her eye to the morning sun; but though the scene had many charms at that hour and season, and though the whins and straggling seedlings caught her

dress as if to detain her, the young wayfarer made no pause.

> "The tears that gathered in her eye
> She left the mountain breeze to dry."

And pushing forward, with all the sudden force of a sensitive nature, urged beyond strength or patience, pressed along the rustling moorland path, without once turning her eyes to look upon that house from which the last gleam of hope disappeared with her disappearance. Henceforth all life of youth and light of affection were severed from Marchmain.

END OF VOL. II.

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